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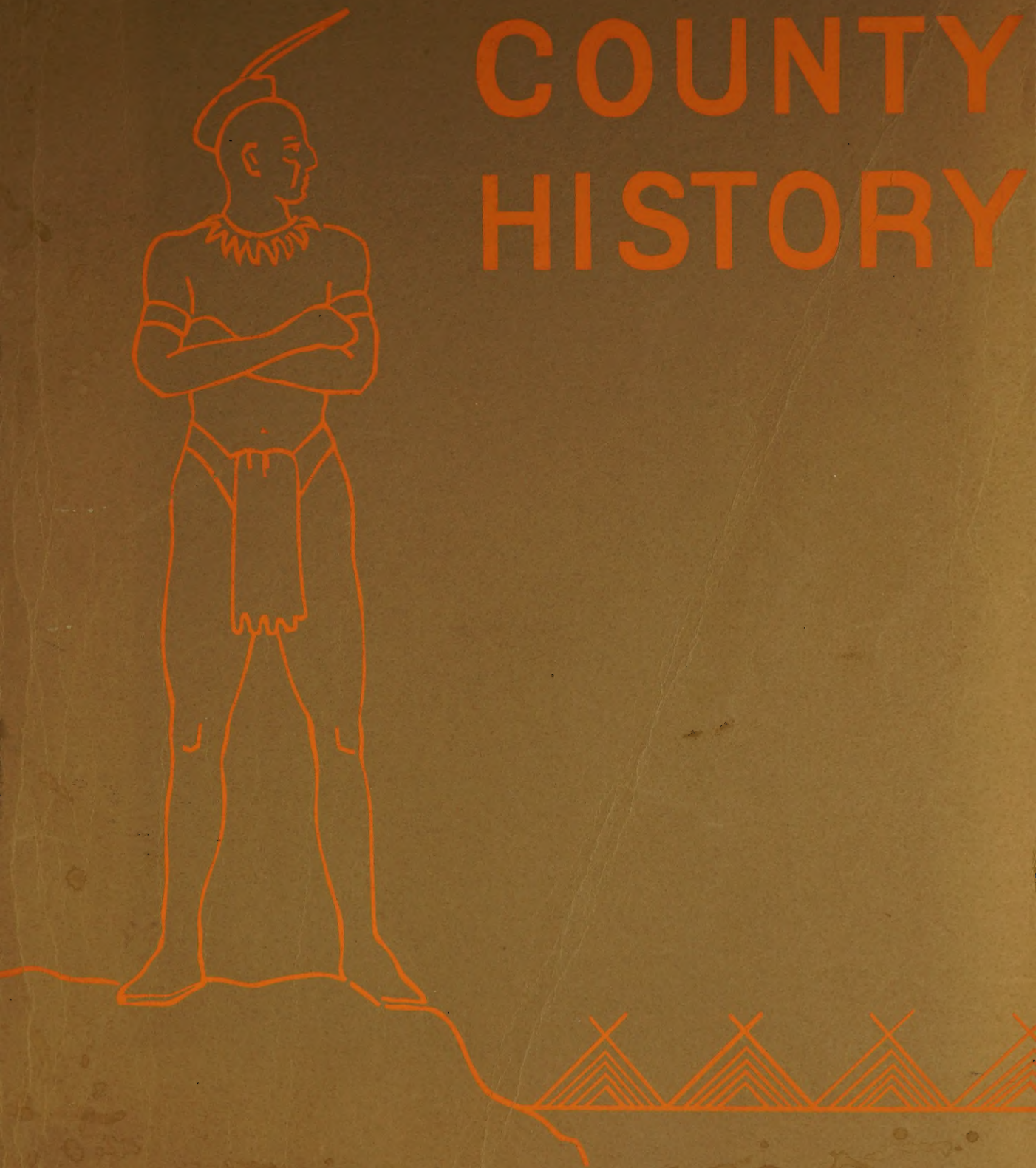
CHEROKEE COUNTY HISTORY



IOWA WRITERS PROJECT

CHEROKEE COUNTY History

IOWA

W.P.A.

Compiled and written by

The Iowa Writers' Program

Of The Work Projects Administration

For the State of Iowa

Sponsored by

County Superintendent of Schools

Cherokee County

1940

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P R E F A C E

Many stories have been written about the pioneer days in Cherokee County but this is the first written for boys and girls.

In the summer of 1939 the Iowa Writers' Program began the long task of collecting data around which has been written this very interesting story about the pioneers of this county. A little of human interest has been woven into the story.

As time passes we can readily see the many changes that have taken place within the borders of Cherokee County since the first white settlers came here in 1856.

Every effort has been made to have all information and dates correct.

Irene Brooks

Irene Brooks
County Superintendent of Schools,
Cherokee County

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CHEROKEE COUNTY HISTORY

INTRODUCTION

Thomas McBride, assistant state geologist, said in his report of this county in 1870, "Cherokee presents a landscape so varied and yet withal so moderate as to be without a rival in all that looks to agricultural beauty and easy, fortunate husbandry."

Named for a tribe of Indians which had its range far to the south near St. Louis, Cherokee County has turned out to be quite as wonderful as those early settlers thought it would be, and their hopes were indeed high. To them it was to be the Eldorado and the Promised Land. From the far East they came, from Massachusetts and from Maine. From the Middle States, Indiana and Ohio and from Dubuque County and the river towns in Iowa, they came to find the "goodly heritage" of the deep black soil.

They came part way by train or on river boats. They came in covered wagons, on horseback, and afoot, each seeking a home in this "land between two rivers." Some sought to settle "where the long slough grass grows," believing that would be the deepest soil and the richest. Some wanted land with a flowing spring of cool water for their families and stock, and when they found springs in Cherokee County they were well pleased and settled there. Some wanted to build on high land where they could look out over their own acres and watch their cattle graze for miles and miles on the broad prairie. They found such places in Cherokee County and contentedly settled there. Some wanted to build along the rivers where there was plenty of wood to burn and fish and game to eat. It seemed warmer, too, in the river valleys and there were always more visitors to bring the news, for the rivers were the first trails, and here the traveler went by on horseback, in Indian canoes, in wagons or on foot. Thus many settled along the Little Sioux River which flows southward through the county.

Did all these people find the good homes they expected, and the good times, and the good crops? The work was hard, food scarce, winters cold, and the living lonely. Some speak of sod breaking, hard times, grasshoppers, wolves howling among the hills, and Indians coming to the door for food; but the old pioneers say, "We were happy then. Those were the good old days." Thomas McCulla writes in his history of Cherokee County, "While the fare was hard at times and the labor rough, there was something -- 'a sort of feelin' in the air' -- that will never come again."

Herbert Quick, who was one of the early mayors of Sioux City and a writer of several books of pioneer life, said: "The prairie was like a great green sea with the spring grass beginning to show on the uplands and the swales coated thick with an emerald growth full bite-high." In the deeper, wetter, hollows grew cowslips with glossy golden

petals. On the hillsides pasque flowers showed their furry coats and a few violets gave promise of making the sunny slopes as blue as the sky. "The keen northwest wind swept before it a flock of white clouds and under the clouds went their shadows, walking over the lovely hills like dark ships over an emerald sea."

For miles and miles the rolling land was carpeted with thick turf. It grew tall and moved in endless waves of shining green in the summer wind and sun. Here was a boundless pasture, a chance to plow and plant without first clearing the land of trees and stumps,rocks and undergrowth, as was so often necessary in the East. Here was a place where the wind could blow over a thousand miles of hay land and the air was sweet with the growing grass.

This prairie land is truly one of the wonders of the world. Prairie is the French word for meadow or grassland and in the broad reaches of the Mississippi Valley the grass grew for centuries without being disturbed. Patches of this wild grass and tall bluestem may still be seen in country schoolyards and in wild sloughs. The wild prairie rose, Iowa's state flower, blooms in pink clusters in June oatfields and along roadsides.

It is said that originally Cherokee County had more native timber than any other five counties in the northwestern portion of the state. Along the rivers there are still places where this timber has not been cut. Here in the fall the crimson berries of the wahoo bush hang like drops of blood. Scarlet bittersweet blazes from the thickets. Woodbine leaves turn red against the brown trunks of river trees. Sumac glows like campfire flames, and hickory trees and cottonwoods turn to shining gold. There are giant cottonwoods here which have been growing since the pioneers came, and tall black walnut trees, oaks, dark Norway spruces, and honey locusts. In Turkey Hollow near a high hill called Rany's Knob is a bladdernut tree. This has queer seeds or nuts which look like the fruit of the groundcherry but have hard shells.

All sorts of flowers bloom in these woodlands -- bloodroot with petals as white as waxen birthday candles spread fanwise in gleaming circles; the white trillium, pink trillium, troutlily or dog's tooth violet,and a small rare flower of palest purple set in a frame of warm brown leaves, the hepatica.

Gum weeds grow tall along the roadsides and sunflowers are yellow as the ripe corn. Late in September one may find the closed blue gentian blooming. In October the sky will suddenly be filled with the white wings of the Franklin's gulls flying low over pasture and plowed land. Then on a certain day, often at sunset or when the sky is low and dark with rain, the wild geese and ducks go over. The steady monotone of their chanting may be heard as they pass far overhead toward the south.

In the tall slough grass the cattails grow and here one may find the Maryland yellowthroat, a small yellow and gray

bird with a black mark across his eyes which looks like a velvet Halloween mask. This bird, like the dickcissel and the meadowlark, sings all season until its song, like the lark's, becomes a familiar and expected background of summer. The red-winged blackbird swings its nest in a clump of buckbrush, ties it firmly with cord, and then sings about it jubilantly all day long, scolding loudly at anyone who approaches too near. In the evening killdeers and nighthawks fly with weird calls. Brilliant pheasants may come down to drink, and the black-crowned night heron, the great blue heron, and the bittern, may be seen. The bittern will often stand stiff and straight in the pastures, trusting to its protective coloration to make it invisible. Once a flock of white pelicans settled on the Little Sioux River for a season. These birds are so huge that they have a wingspread of eight feet and farmers along the river stopped their work in amazement to watch them.

A Cherokee County 4-H girl tells how she saw little foxes come out to play when she went to pick gooseberries. Beavers come back also to the streams of Cherokee County and have established several colonies. Virginia opossum and raccoon are frequently seen, as well as skunk, weasel, mink and an occasional badger.

Thus we see that Cherokee County is a land of contrasts -- a land of ancient things and of new things, a land which may yield with the rich opulence of the South and in another season may present the brooding, frozen, lonely landscape of the North. Here cultivated fields lie beside wild prairie and woodland, purebred livestock thrive as well as wild beaver, and implements left to us from older days may be found as well as brightly painted modern implements.

But the story of Cherokee County is too long and too complex to tell in one small volume. In an area of some 573 square miles about 19,000 people live. We can but touch the surface in this space.

If anyone should ever tell you that nothing exciting ever happens in Cherokee County, give him the story of the two back-woodsmen of Hardin County, Kentucky, who met one February morning in 1809. One man asked the other, "Any news down t' th' village, Ezray?"

And the second replied, "Well, Squire McLean's gone t' Washington t' see Madison swore in, an' ol' Spellman tells me this Bonaparte fella has captured most o' Spain. What's new out here, neighbor?"

Whereupon the first man, sure of his ground, answered, "Nothin' a tall, nothin' a tall, 'cept fer a new baby down 't Tom Lincoln's. Nothin' ever happens here."

THE MAKING OF THE PRAIRIE

Chapter 1

As man writes history in books, nature writes in rock. Geologists who have learned to read this history written in the rocks can tell us what happened in Iowa thousands of years before there were any men or women here to write about it. When we ask where these white pieces of limestone came from, the geologists tell us that Iowa was once at the bottom of a great sea or ocean. In this sea lived millions of tiny sea animals or shellfish. As these fish died during long years their shells sank to the bottom of the sea and after long ages of time these shells formed thick layers of white stone which we call limestone. The shapes of many of these tiny skeletons and shells may be seen in bits of limestone found today.

Men who have studied the rocks say that after long ages the bottom of the ocean was raised and Iowa became a vast swamp. Great trees and ferns grew here. When these trees and ferns died they fell into the water of the swamp for long ages. Finally thick layers of vegetation were formed and when the land sank again, sand and gravel from the ocean washed over these layers. After ages of tremendous pressure these layers of trees and ferns were turned into coal. In many pieces of coal today, the shapes of fern leaves and tree stems may be seen.

After Iowa had been raised above the ocean for the last time, the weather turned very cold. Years went by and the snow became thousands of feet deep. The weight of all this snow became so great that the lower layers were pressed into ice and a great sheet of ice nearly a mile thick and hundreds of miles across was formed. This sheet extended far to the north of Iowa into Canada and when it began to move it passed southward over Iowa. It moved so slowly that no one could have seen it move but it had a tremendous power. It crushed rocks, grinding them to bits, plowed over hills, smoothing the land flat and filling in the deepest valleys. When the climate became warm again this ice sheet melted and left the land covered with fine soil and rock. This soil is called "glacial drift."

Five times huge glaciers moved over Iowa but the last three covered only a part of the state. Each time when a glacier had passed the climate became mild again and animals and birds came back to Iowa to live. The bones of many of these animals are often found in gravel pits and hillsides of Iowa today. From the remains of skeletons scientists have reconstructed many animals which no man ever saw alive. Some of these animals must have been very huge, for the enormous jaw bones, skulls and teeth are larger than similar bones of our largest animals today. Some of these prehistoric animals are the mammoth elephant, the dinosaur, and the mastodon. Millions of years ago they roamed the earth.

After the glaciers had passed over Iowa the land was almost level. There were no high mountains left and most of the hills were low. Most of the rocks had been ground up to make soil. The land seems to have been prepared especially for farming. In the northeast corner of the state where McGregor is situated, however, many high hills and rocks are left because the glaciers did not pass over this region. One huge red rock in Cherokee County, left by the glaciers, has been called Pilot Rock because it served as a guide and landmark in the early days. This rock is said to be the largest boulder of this type in the state. If such huge rocks as this and such high hills as those at McGregor had been left all over the state it would have been impossible to plow and plant in level fields as we do today. So by leveling the land and grinding up the rocks the glaciers did a great work. Our deep soil in Cherokee County was built up by the action of these glaciers.

Now what happened after the passing of the glacial period? Why was this a prairie land instead of a forest land? No one seems to know that. Perhaps drouth or forest fires destroyed the trees at regular intervals, so that only grass could grow, with a few trees along the streams.

THE MOUND BUILDERS

Chapter 2

The first people who lived in Iowa were Indians, no doubt, but they were not like the tribes of Indians found here when the white man came. Their houses, weapons, and pottery which have been dug out of the earth by students interested in the prehistoric Indian have shown that these Indians were very different. In the first place they built mounds, sometimes in which to bury their dead, sometimes as roofs for their earth dwellings. Some of these mounds are built in the shape of birds or animals and are called effigy mounds. It may have been only four or five hundred years ago that these Indians lived in Iowa, or it may have been a thousand years ago. Indians were still building mounds when Dubuque was buried in eastern Iowa; in fact they built one above his grave. At the same time Indians in this region were burying their dead by placing them high in the limbs of certain trees. The old Indian burial tree near Ida Grove still stands to prove that this was one manner of the disposal of Indian dead at that time.

Indian mounds have been found in every county of Iowa but they are often only four or five feet high and are now obscured by grass and trees, plowed up, or washed away. Men who have studied the different kinds of mounds say that there must have been different tribes of the mound builders, as they are called, living here at different times, for while all the mounds contain utensils, weapons, and bones, the pottery in the different mound groups shows a great difference. These differences indicate the state of culture or development in the tribe.

The Indians who lived in the region of Cherokee County left remains of a culture entirely different from that of any other. This has been called the Mill Creek culture because bits of pottery and bone weapons of this type were first found along Mill Creek, in the northern part of the county. Prof. Charles R. Keys, archeologist at Cornell College at Mt. Vernon, Iowa, is now (1939-40) making a study of this culture. Excavations at the Kimball mound and near the Broken Kettle road in Woodbury County were made by Mr. Keys in the summer of 1939.

Pottery of the Mill Creek type is dark in color and the clay has been tempered with crushed granite. The vessels found are globular in shape and are decorated with cross hatching, rounded indentations, diagonal incised lines and occasionally with the molded heads of birds and animals. Much of the pottery is in broken pieces when found. Pipes and spoons found are made from the same kind of baked clay.

Indians of the Mill Creek culture also made pictographs or picture-signs on polished tablets of catlinite, or red pipestone. These pictures were carved on the stone with incised lines in symbolic designs, which are often so artistic

that they seem to have been done in the main part for decoration. In fact some of the designs are beautiful and photographs made on the various stones suggest the simplicity of designs used in modern art.

Some of the mystery surrounding the 30 or more Indian village sites recognized in the region extending from the town of Linn Grove in Buena Vista County, across the southeast corner of O'Brien County, and thence southward through Cherokee County almost to the southern border, has been solved by the excavations of F. L. Van Voorhis of Alta, Iowa. In two years of careful digging he has opened one of the family dwellings and recovered thousands of relics.

The first dwelling to be discovered was 30 by 40 feet and was three feet deep in the ground. The roof had probably been four feet above the surface as the post holes in the floor could still be seen. This structure was set true to the main points of the compass, the long way north and south. On one corner was a sloping entrance, also covered. The roof was doubtless of the sod-house type, and had fallen in. Dug into the floor of hard yellow clay were 16 pits, round with straight sides and flat at the bottom. These were evidently used for storage of food, for fireplaces, for drainage in wet weather and for the disposal of refuse in winter or during storms.

In these pits the numerous articles found disclose the manner of life of these Indians. Their stonework not only shows skill and patience, but a discerning taste for fine materials. The range of stone variety is surprising. Mr. Van Voorhis has a set of gem points containing cat's eye, moonstone, tiger eye, rose quartz, brechia, agate, three shades of quartzite, and chalcedony. A collection of stone articles including celts, axes, tomahawks, knives, and scrapers was found. A complete set of garden tools was gathered showing that they cultivated fields and gardens. Corn on the ear and shelled beans and fruit seeds were found in the ashes of the fire pits. Beds of cattails, coarse sloughgrass and tall reeds were found, the last probably used to make baskets. Many other remains of plants and trees were found. Opening along the walls were evidently closed by means of hanging mats or skins.

A shell comb was discovered and other artifacts which might have been used as hairpins and ornaments. Evidences of smoking and game playing were numerous. Three pipes, two of stone and one of clay were recovered, and scraps of mullen, kinnikinnick, dried bark of the red willow, and hemp (marijuana) found, indicated that these had been used for smoking. Different types of dice were found and round stones to play a game similar to our game of quoits.

Another game must have been played similar to our football. Two pellets of wood or bone were tied to the ends of a string a foot long. The players carried this on a stick, their aim being to hang it over a goal at the end of the playground. Two of these gameballs were found, together with toys, pots, and playthings for children.

A raised platform at the back is believed to have been an altar. Near it, in a shallow pocket, was a well preserved portion of a human jaw. In another pit were the charred remains of three human skulls. No one knows whether this was a sacrifice or burnt offering or whether it was merely a crematory pit. Effigies also were found which might have been symbols for worship.

No cemeteries belonging to the Mill Creek Indians have been found but a skeleton was discovered near Cherokee while some railroad men were working to the south of the Little Sioux River about 1883. Not much was there except the skull, but nearby was found a circular clay vessel, with a pretty border. It was in one piece but fell apart when they handled it. In the Kimball mound several skeletons were discovered. Three more skeletons were uncovered by C. C. C. boys near Cherokee in 1939. While digging gravel on the W. H. Fishman farm the skeletons were found and removed under the supervision of Dr. F. M. Tanous and Nestor L. Stiles. The bones were well preserved but had taken on a brown color from long interment. Every tooth in one skull was in perfect condition. These bones were coated with shellac in order to preserve them. There was no doubt but that these were Indian skeletons, and there is still much to learn about the prehistoric Indians of Cherokee County. No one is certain about them.

It is interesting to visit an Indian mound which is being excavated. A deep trench is dug straight through the center to a depth of seven or eight feet. On either side smaller trenches or tunnels are dug out. Layers of shells and refuse, bones and charcoal may be seen along the edges of the digging, or trench. Pieces of flint and whetstones may be found with deep ridges worn away where the bone knives of the Indians have been sharpened. All kinds of pieces of chicken bones, leg bones, knuckles, and bone beads may be found. Sometimes a piece of the red stone or clay may be found from which the Indians made their warpaint. Clamshells are numerous and often huge animal jaw bones are found.

A collection of these relics dug from Indian mounds may be seen in the Cherokee high school museum. Much of this collection was loaned by Nestor L. Stiles of Cherokee, an authority on the archeology of this section. The entire Stiles collection, 847 pieces, includes the weapons and relics from later Indian days, and was first shown at the school in 1924. This high school museum is now said to be one of the best high school museums in the state.

THE LAND OF THE INDIANS

Chapter 3

Who lived in Cherokee County when Marquette and Joliet first pushed their canoes down the Mississippi River past the eastern shores of Iowa in 1673? There were no white men here then. There were no large Indian villages. But there were Indian trails leading through the thick prairie grass and evidences that Indians lived here. These trails were made by Sioux Indians for the Sioux were wandering tribes who moved their villages often when they hunted and went where they pleased.

These scattered Indian tribes left the country much the way they found it for hundreds of years. They hunted only as much game as they needed for food and to furnish skins for clothing and teepees. They did not build bridges nor roads nor cities. They did not plow the fields nor cut down many of the trees. They were a part of the wildlife of the prairie. Once in awhile an Indian hunter would silently follow the trails with bare feet, or in soft deerskin moccasins. They would paddle their silent canoes on the rivers, and shoot their stone tipped arrows at the wild birds and animals. But most of the time deer and buffalo could come down to drink without fear and could stand for hours feeding in the long grass without being alarmed. The prairie was quiet.

There is a great red rock on which the Indians painted signs and picture messages as they went by along the trail. This rock became known to many tribes for it could be seen a long way off and so became a guidepost to direct the way across the great prairie country. Pioneers called it Pilot Rock because it was a landmark from the earliest years.

This was Cherokee County in the beginning before Iowa was known to the white man and it must have been much the same when the first settler arrived. One of these early settlers, Luther Phipps, tells of the wild game when he came; "Game in those days was very plentiful. Besides the larger game such as deer and elk, wild turkeys, prairie chickens and a species of curlew as big as a chicken with a bill about eight inches long, abounded."

The curlew is now extinct. It had a peculiar whistle and, when cooked, was delicate in flavor. Raccoons were plentiful, too, and were not only edible but valuable also for their pelts. Fox and mink abounded, and in one year a man sold a hundred dollars worth of mink skins trapped within the limits of what is now Cherokee.

In the winter there were howling wolves, wild winds and blowing snow. In the spring there were all sorts of fish, wild geese, ducks and prairie chickens. Skunk, beaver and muskrat were common. Gallons of wild honey could be gathered, for the wild bees were everywhere. Wild strawberries, plums, grapes, black and red raspberries, gooseberries

and choke cherries could be gathered in season and nuts could be found in the fall from black walnut trees, hickories and hazel brush. Rattlesnakes were often seen and the settlers had to watch out for them. The Indians did not wish to leave these good hunting grounds but the settlers kept crowding in, the Government bought their land piece by piece as they were driven westward across the state, and so, tribe by tribe, they were forced to go. Most of the later trouble with the Indians was caused by ill feeling over their land. The Indians felt that they had been wronged when they saw all their hunting land taken over and their trails, which they knew so well, plowed up.

During the winter the prairie Indians stored up dried meat and corn in their wigwams, wickiups, or teepees. They made warm clothes of deerskins and they knew where to find rabbits, squirrels and prairie chickens in the deep snow. They usually lived along the rivers where they could find wood to burn and where the ground was soft and could be planted to corn, beans, and other crops in the spring. The squaws planted and took care of the Indian gardens and fields. These squaws did not have plows, harrows, or any such tools and machines. They used a pointed stick to plant the seed, and a hoe made of a piece of bone or clamshell tied to a stick. Each squaw could take care of only a small plot of ground. In the fall she gathered the harvest -- beans, pumpkins, squash and a few root crops, besides the corn. Some of the corn was ground and packed away in bags made from the skins of animals. In these bags, beans and whole corn could also be stored away for winter use.

During the great hunts in the fall and again in the spring after the gardens were planted, everyone in the village except the old folk joined in the search for food. Among the Sioux each family rolled up the teepee, robes, and household things, and placed the bundle in a basket hung between two poles that a pony dragged. The smaller children climbed into the basket and the whole party set out, one family after another in a long line. The women led the horses. At night, poles were cut and the teepees set up quickly in a long row. The next day the group moved on again, in quest of game.

The Indian warrior often wore a string of bear claws around his neck. The Ioway warriors fastened on their heads a crest made of a deer's tail and horsehair. Indians made their warpaint by mixing bear's grease with any kind of coloring they could find, such as red clay, powdered rock, or chalk. Their wigwams were sometimes made of skin, and sometimes made of strips of bark and mats of grass spread over poles. The poles were bent over and each end stuck into the ground so that this framework looked like croquet arches. At one end was a doorway open in summer and closed with a buffalo hide or elk skin in winter.

It was usually dark inside, and smoky, for there were no windows and only one small hole at the peak to let out the smoke. Around the sides were piles of skins which served as beds. Each had a special place to sit and sleep.

Even the puppies had a corner where they could snuggle together and keep warm. In a sort of hammock cradle hanging against the wall, out of reach of the dogs, was the place where the black-eyed papoose slept.

In the middle of the floor a fire was built and over it hung a blackened kettle made of clay. In this pot the Indian squaw boiled the deer, dog meat, buffalo, or fowl. She might add beans, corn meal, or dried squash to the broth as it boiled. When the food was cooked the squaws served the Indian men first with gourds or clamshells full of the steaming soup. Bone spoons were used to dip up the food. After the men and visitors had been fed the women and children ate what was left. More meat and vegetables were then added so that the soup would be ready when anyone grew hungry again.

While the old men sat in the shade, smoking and telling stories, and the young men played and practiced shooting in the fields, the women were busy tanning skins for clothing, weaving mats of grass and bark, drying meat and vegetables for winter, carrying wood and water and tending the babies. They did all the work about the village. The men had to hunt and fish and fight their enemies.

Why did the Indians fight? Most troubles usually started over favorite hunting grounds. Each tribe would want a certain location and the stronger tribe would get it. The Sauks and Foxes hated the Winnebagoes and Sioux Indians, and often went to war against them. When once an Indian had been wronged in some way he considered it his duty to get revenge on the other tribe. These wars were kept up year after year, and prowess was measured by skill on the warpath. Before a brave could wear the coveted eagle's feather in his headdress he had to kill an enemy warrior. So when any Indian suspected some invasion of his own territory or when one of his tribe had been murdered, it was the signal to get out the warpaint, dance the war dance and go out to fight.

Indian agents were soon appointed by the Government to keep peace among the Indians, to make treaties with them, and to teach them to farm, but the Indians did not want to change their ways, and the Sioux were the worst of all. Proud and haughty, they resented the rule of the paleface. They could not be conquered by promises of money nor controlled by the imaginary lines described in the various treaties. Fort Croghan was built near Council Bluffs to keep the Sioux from fighting the Potawatomis and in the spring of 1842 John James Audubon visited the soldiers at the fort. But the Sioux remained the problem children of the Government.

When the settlers began to come into the country Indian troubles were much worse than they had been before. For the white man had guns and axes made of steel. He was a stronger enemy than any Indian. Too, there were more white men than Indians. "The waves of settlers seemed to sweep over Iowa like a prairie fire." First the Indians gave up a strip of land 50 miles wide along the Mississippi in 1832.

Ten years later the Ioways, Sauks and Foxes lost their homes in the Des Moines River Valley. The Winnebagoes had been moved into the Neutral Ground and the Potawatomis had been transferred from Illinois to southwestern Iowa.

Then in June 1846 the Missouri River slope was opened up by the Government for white settlement and again the Indians were driven out -- this time from the area which includes Cherokee County. Thus not only did the white men bother the Indians but they also drove the tribes closer and closer together so that the different tribes bothered each other. This led to more war. There was always trouble on the frontier.

Finally the Sauks and Foxes, in a week-long council with Governor Chambers, agreed to sell their land in Iowa and go to Kansas within three years. When the three years were up they did not want to go but at last they packed up their kettles, mounted their ponies, called their dogs and wandered off westward toward Kansas. About 200 stayed behind hoping they would not be noticed, but the next year soldiers from Fort Des Moines rounded them up and marched them to their new homes beyond the Missouri River. But even then they did not stay. They did not like Kansas. A large group of them saved up their money from the Government and bought land in Iowa where they wanted to live. These are the Tama Indians who are here today. They own their own land and live as they please.

Tribes of Sioux also kept coming back to beg, steal,and make trouble. At last the Government bought the remaining Sioux land for about $340,000. Early citizens of Washta tell of seeing the long wagon trains of the Sioux passing down the main street with tents folded, dogs following, on their way to a new camp on the banks of the Little Sioux River. The pioneer children would often go down to visit these camps and stare curiously at the tattered blankets which the Indian squaws used for shawls, the lined faces of the women, the swarthy men, the black-haired Indian children, and the latest papoose. The clean kitchens and polished pans of the settlers' houses contrasted strangely with the smoky disorder of an Indian camp. Before this the Winnebagoes had moved out into Minnesota, so at last Iowa was cleared of all Indians but the settled, land-owning Tamas.

THE WHITE MAN COMES TO CHEROKEE COUNTY

Chapter 4

After the last Indian had been driven out of northwestern Iowa and the Government had taken over all the land and had sent surveyors out to measure it and mark off the counties, the people in the Eastern States became very much interested. Plans were made to settle in the new land and many families packed up and started West.

At Milford, in Massachusetts, two men bent their heads over a map of this new country, planning a great adventure. They were planning to organize a colony to go out and settle in this West. Their fingers followed the courses of the rivers of western Iowa -- the Missouri, the Big Sioux, the Little Sioux, and the Maple rivers, and at last stopped at one place. This was where the Big Sioux River empties into the Missouri. "Here we will build a city," they said, "in the great West -- in Iowa!"

Then they shook hands across the table. It was a great moment. Their faces glowed with hope. These two men were Dr. Dwight Russell and Dr. Slocum of Milford. The time was December, 1855.

The adventure they planned that cold winter evening was successful though it did not turn out exactly as they thought it would. The place they had chosen, the present site of Sioux City, had already been taken and their town was eventually founded on the Little Sioux River about 60 miles east of there, the place now called Cherokee.

First they chose two young men to go out and look over the land. These two were Carlton Corbett and Lemuel Parkhurst. Parkhurst had a wife and three children, Corbett was not married. They set out about January 10 or 11, 1856. The weather was intensely cold. When they reached the Detroit River they had to cross on the ice. Boats had crossed in the morning but by afternoon the channel had frozen over. Parkhurst and Corbett, each carrying one of the children, started over the dangerously thin ice. It bent under their weight but they hurried, and did get across.

Soon afterward Parkhurst left his wife and children at his brother's home in Pecatonica, Illinois, and the two men went on alone to Davenport by train, crossed the river, and then rode the train to Iowa City. From there they traveled to Council Bluffs by stagecoach, a weary journey. Many times they had to get out and pry the wheels out of the deep snow, but at last they arrived, to learn that Sioux City had already been settled.

After considerable discussion and study of their maps, they at last decided to go on with the stagecoach to Sioux City anyway. They started with the mail and several passengers. The snow was deep, the road could hardly be seen, and the Passengers walked most of the way.

Finally Corbett and Parkhurst asked the mail carrier to

let them have the mail, declaring that they could take it into Sioux City sooner than the lumbering stage and the struggling horses. The mail carrier let them have it, and they arrived in Sioux City 24 hours before the stage got there.

They found the town already established at Sioux City, and lots selling, so they went on up the Big Sioux River from there, but did not see enough timber in this region, so started back. They arrived in Sergeant's Bluff, eight miles below Sioux City, tired and discouraged. Where could they ever find a good place for the colony?

The next day, however, something happened which changed everything for Corbett and Parkhurst. They met a stranger who said he was from Cherokee County. "Plenty of timber up there in my country," he told them, "and clear springs of cold water and all the fish and game you can eat." It was Robert Perry, Cherokee County's first settler. He directed the two young men to the Little Sioux Valley.

The next day Corbett set out on foot, leaving Parkhurst behind, but taking with him another man, John Martin. They found the place which is now Correctionville and from there went up the Little Sioux. They passed what is now Washta and Quimby, to a large grove in what is now Pilot Township, and camped for the night.

The next morning they were awakened by the gobbling of wild turkeys. The sun shone hot and bright, and the grass was turning green everywhere. Birds sang. It was now early in May. Corbett began to like the place. For weeks he had traveled through snow, mud and slush -- all through March and April, living on "corndodgers" (made of corn meal mixed with water and baked in a Dutch oven, a heavy, iron pot tightly covered and surrounded with hot embers). Now it was warm and dry, and they could shoot a plump bird to roast over the campfire. It was a good place to live -- this Cherokee County.

Following an old Indian trail up the valley, they suddenly came to a large red rock. It was a strange, huge boulder, in the middle of the miles of grass. Examining its surface they found there the symbols and signs of the Indians, but could make nothing of their meaning. They were glad to be armed, in the face of this silent, sinister reminder of the Redman.

From here they went on to the present site of Cherokee and after tramping over the region for two more days to make sure that there was good soil, pure water, and plenty of good timberland for the new settlement, they turned back toward Correctionville well pleased with the results of their exploring. At last they had found a place!

Back at Correctionville a welcome surprise was in store for them for they arrived to find Dr. Russell and several members of the Milford company had made the trip in six weeks time and were already there. Luck seemed to be with them now.

They pitched their tents beside the Little Sioux River in a pleasant grove, and one of them shot a deer, for meat. Nearby they planted the first two acres of corn. Their great adventure had started well.

Around the campfire at night, the story of the trip was told - how the company, Dr. Russell, George Kay, George Lebourveau, Albert Phipps, and several other families had left Milford on the 14th of April, following the route to Albany, New York, and thence through Ohio to Chicago, Illinois. They tarried one day "in that muddy city, built on the lake marshes where, if one stepped off the walk, he would go out of sight." They pushed on to Dubuque, and there, since the railroad ended at the waters of the Mississippi, bought horses, harness, wagons and flour, before setting out across the Iowa mud. Two of the families, however, embarked for St. Louis and from there traveled up the Missouri to Council Bluffs.

The lack of good bridges impeded the main party, who nevertheless were able on some days to travel as much as 25 miles. The third day they met a man from Indiana; "Hoop Pale Township, Posey County!" They asked him how much corn he raised there. "A right smart; sold a heap and had a power left," was his answer.

They stopped at Eldora to attend a day's session of court. In the East they had been accustomed to portly judges with gray hair. Here they saw "a young man, away from the others in the room, with his feet on the table. The attorneys likewise had their feet higher than their heads." They were all smoking pipes.....On the floor was dirt, and mud several inches deep.

Continuing westward to a grove in Hamilton County, they traversed a road churned into mud by heavy rains; one wagon stuck so hopelessly that they had to spend the night in a nearby shanty.

They stopped next at Webster City, and from this place George Kay sent a letter back East. At the top he wrote "Four miles beyond sundown, and seven beyond the knowledge of God." Some of the party stayed there until June, waiting for the roads to get better, and the rest went on to Fort Dodge. Here they found a log hotel, with two rows of beds on the floor, and no walls to separate them. One man wanted a room by himself because he said he had a large sum of money with him. The German landlord said, "Money, how much you got?"

The man told him, "five hundred dollars," whereupon the landlord said: "Oh, every poty gots more money as dat -- throw him down here any vare; no poty steals him, but if you gots a bottle of whiskey, look out for him, for someone steals him before morning!"

The next day they hired a ferryman to take them across the Des Moines River. His boat was a cottonwood dugout. The wagons had to be taken apart and carried over in pieces. The horses swam. On the last trip one of the men, George Kay, stood up in the boat and turned it over. The water was

20 feet deep there. Kay and the ferryman clung to the dugout, and the rest swam. Finally they all got across and no one was drowned.

They learned that the biggest obstacle of the journey was called "Hell's Slough" or "Purgatory" because it was so difficult to cross. The horses got stuck in the mud and had to be unhitched and led across. Afterwards the men waded through mud and water to their armpits and fastened a rope 100 feet long to the wagon tongue, so that the horses, standing on hard ground, could pull out the wagon.

When they arrived in Sac City the next day there were only two houses, and one of these was not finished. At Ida Grove, the following day, they found only one house, owned by Judge Moorhead, who was judge, treasurer, and recorder of his county.

At Correctionville in Woodbury County they stopped three days. Their food consisted of corn bread baked very hard, and coffee, "without sugar or milk." They were allowed to sleep on the floor.

For the trip to Cherokee, they strapped tents and cooking utensils to three horses. After covering seven miles (this must have been near the present site of Washta), they shot a deer and stopped for a square meal. They reached Cherokee May 11, 1856, and while looking about the country, lived almost wholly on the fish which were so plentiful. But they lacked salt, and poor Kay, who could not eat fish without it "would go out by the side of the tent, pull his vest around him to see how much flesh he had lost, then go back to the tent and sit with his hands up to his face. This he repeated three or four times during the cooking of each meal."

Chapter 5

The Milford settlers built five cabins that first summer in Cherokee County. The first was a hotel, or home for the whole colony. It was 12 feet wide, 20 feet long, and one and one-half stories high. Three smaller cabins were built by Lemuel Parkhurst, George Lebourveau, and Benjamin Holbrook for their respective families. Carlton Corbett and Benjamin Holbrook built one together. The Browns and the Hammonds, the two families who left the Milford company at Dubuque to go by boat to St. Louis, came to Cherokee County in the fall, and Mrs. Lemuel Parkhurst came with her three children in August.

All of the men in the colony worked hard and long, chopping down trees along the Little Sioux River. They chose the straightest trees they could find and those most nearly the same size. When all the branches had been trimmed off they hitched horses to the logs and hauled them one or two at a time to the separate cabin sites. Some of the settlers hewed their logs square, but most of the cabins were built of round logs.

When the logs were all ready with flat notches or "saddles" cut near the ends so that they would fit tightly together, all the men got together to help with the "raising." Four strong and able men stood at the four corners and fitted the logs as they were lifted up into place. The builders "carried up the corners" with a log on each side and then two more across the ends.

By laying the logs with the big end first one way and then the other, and cutting the saddles deeper in the big end, the walls were kept level.

Everyone worked hard and the cabins rose quickly. When the walls were eight feet above the groundceiling beams were laid across the side walls. Then the gable ends were started. Each log was cut a little shorter than the one below to make the slant for the roof. The ends of the logs were then hewn to match the slope of the roof and the logs were held in place by strong wooden pegs.

Stout poles placed at the ends of the gable logs formed the beams of the roof. Over these were laid boards slabs of wood about four feet long, split thin from the straight grained portions of log ends. The rows of these "clapboards" overlapped like shingles, and on each lap a pole was fastened with wooden pegs to hold the clapboards in place. No nails were used at that early date.

Now the main part of the work was done. This was called the "raising" of the house and sometimes a party was held at nightfall, but we have no record of any party at the Milford cabins. Next the cracks between the logs had to be filled in or "chinked" with clay, or with mud mixed with grass. Openings had to be sawed in the walls for a door and windows.

The windows were left open much of the time in the summer,but in bad weather they were covered with oiled paper or greased deerskin. Later when the railroad was built to Cherokee, glass could be bought to replace these dark windows.

The door was made of heavy boards hewn from logs, and hung on wooden or iron hinges. For a lock the pioneers used a simple bar that dropped into a catch on the inside. By means of a leather thong tied to the latch and stuck through a hole above, the door could be opened from the outside. It was locked by pulling the latchstring in through the hole. This is where we get the old saying which is used so often among friends, "The latchstring will always be out for you."

At one end of the cabin a fireplace was built. Sometimes it was made of stone but in Cherokee County logs may have been used. These logs would be lined with stone to keep them from burning. A large flat rock was laid in front of the fireplace for a hearthstone. The chimney was made of sticks built up as the walls of the log cabin were built and plastered inside and out with mud. The settlers called this a cat-and-clay chimney.

The floor was usually of earth, packed hard and smooth, but later the pioneer would add a "puncheon" floor, made of logs split in two and hewn smooth on the flat side with the ax. With an ax and auger he also could make a puncheon table, a one-legged bed fastened to the wall in one corner, some stools, shelves, and benches.

The beams across the ceiling were covered with slabs to make a loft for sleeping, or for storing things, and a ladder was built to reach this loft.

Most of this tedious work of home building was done with the ax, which has been called "the simplest and most powerful work tool ever invented." Emerson Hough wrote of the ax, "If you do not understand it (the ax) you do not understand America..... stern, simple, severe, wasteful -- truly this was the typical American implement." Other tools which the early pioneers used were the maul and wedge, crosscut saw and hand saw, and the adze used to make shingles and clapboards. Their ax handles, plow beams, harrow teeth, hayracks, and wagons were made of hardwood, tough hickory, walnut, oak, or sometimes even of cottonwood. Churns, tubs, barrels, and buckets were made of softer wood, such as maple or basswood. Cradles and watering troughs were made of hollow logs.

Many of the early homes in Cherokee County were not built so well as the Milford cabins. Mrs. C. V. Van Epps who came to O'Brien County, adjoining Cherokee, in 1872 has left us a good description of some of these prairie homes. She came by railroad, "alighting at a shanty depot bearing the name of Marcus." Here her husband met her in a prairie schooner and drove her 22 miles to their 160-acre claim in the next county. They saw only two homes on this trip.

Mrs. Van Epps writes: "When we think of these dugouts or shacks now, it is hard to realize how one lived. There was a hole dug down three feet or more in the ground and

then a frame of whatever you could get, made over that, and sometimes only the sod, which was very tough, cut in squares and built up. There were no floors, no partitions, unless made of bed quilts." She adds that she has stood in six inches of snow in one of these dugouts, doing the washing for a sick family, whose home it was.

Her husband hauled the lumber for their new home from the mill at Cherokee but when she arrived in September no door had yet been built for the new cabin which was 14 by 18 feet in size, and no windows had been put in. Rag carpets were hung over the openings at night to keep out the cold air.

Cherokee County was dotted with log cabins and sod houses. Cabins commonly had clay floors and were roofed with clapboards, "shakes," or thatched with hay covered with sod. Most cabins had cellars or root houses dug on the outside of the house and covered with clay and sod. These root houses had no outside opening but were entered by steps leading from inside the cabin. The cabin fire kept this cellar from freezing. Because matches were hard to get the cabin fire was not often allowed to go out. In the same way, as fire was kept burning, so yeast was kept over from one baking to the next. If a pioneer mother lost her supply of yeast or "starter" she had to borrow from a neighbor. Loaves of bread were baked in a covered pan among the hot coals of the fire.

Johnnycake or corndodgers, made from the corn meal, were cooked in a long handled skillet held over the fire or on a flat stone leaned toward the heat. Meat or fowl was hung on a twisted string from a hook above the fire. As the string slowly turned, unwinding, the meat was roasted on all sides. The fat dropped into a dripping pan set on the hearth and when the children would upset this dish by accident as they played, their mother would say, "Now the fat is in the fire." Many old sayings such as this came down to us from pioneer days.

Food, such as potatoes, turnips, carrots, pumpkins, squash, and cabbage were stored in the root houses. Meat was smoked or salted down in stone jars of brine. Hominy was made by soaking corn in lye from wood ashes until the hulls came off and the corn was soft. The lye water was then poured off, the corn rinsed,and cooked in salted water. This "hulled corn", as it was often called, was served in bowls with milk, or fried in lard or butter. Apples, pumpkins, and peppers were dried in the sun and stored in bags hung from the ceiling of the cabin.

One pioneer cabin in Cherokee County, which was built at a later day than the Milford cabins, still stands and may be seen today near the graveled highway about one mile north of Washta on the road to Cherokee. This cabin was built by an Irishman named Johnny O'Hagen. It has no fireplace, so O'Hagen must have had a stove. There is a large cellar. Originally there was a lean-to porch but this has been torn off. The walls are made of large cottonwood logs, squared

with the ax, and chinked with grayish plaster. The windows have casings made of sawed boards and look as though they had once been fitted with glass, but for many years they have been open to the weather. Schoolboys of Washta, grandsons of the pioneers, restored the roof of this cabin in 1936, as high winds had completely destroyed it except for a few beams and the whole structure was sagging into ruins. They also built a new floor and a stout door of sawed cottonwood boards.

TROUBLE WITH THE INDIANS

Chapter 6

The winter of 1856-1857 set in with a fury which surprised the Milford settlers. They were used to severe New England weather but they were not prepared for a prairie winter. Snowstorms began in November, and high winds raked the valley. Blizzards raged through the Christmas season and all Iowa was buried under snow.

The colonists had come in May, and had not had time to raise a great quantity of food that first summer. They had been busy building their cabins, organizing the new town, and marking off their lands. They had depended on getting supplies from the outside and on shooting enough wild game to keep well supplied with food. Most of the men were not farmers. They were professional men, shoemakers, mechanics, etc., and knew nothing about raising crops on a large scale.

By February every ravine was filled in level with snow. It was almost impossible to haul supplies from Fort Dodge or Sac City and wild game perished in the drifts. All the settlers had to eat was flour, corn meal, potatoes, turnips, hominy, molasses, salt pork, and smoked ham. As the cold, stormy weather continued the supplies of meat and flour gave out. Men were sent out after provisions but they could bring back only a little. It was a terrible winter.

But there were always bright fires burning in the cabins and the cold wind was shut-out by well-built log walls, while the Indians in their skin teepees shivered from the cold, and their supplies of food were exhausted by January. They found no more game on the plains of Dakota and Minnesota where they now made their homes, and believed that the white men, who had taken their old hunting grounds in Iowa, were to blame for their misery. Hungry, cold and bitter at heart they struggled back southward in small groups, begging food from the settlers, who had little to spare.

These wandering Indians ate greedily of the small supplies of the Milford colony, but they were treated as friends nevertheless. As winter advanced they became sullen and unruly, and stole livestock and horses. The settlers began to say, "A hungry Indian is a bad Indian."

Then came Inkpaduta and his band of about 15 Sioux warriors with their squaws and children. Inkpaduta really was a bad Indian. He had become an outlaw among his own tribe as well as among the whites. Long ago his brother had been murdered by a white man named Henry Lott, and he remembered the wrong and sought revenge, a characteristic of all Indian Tribes. Often Indians would wreak their vengeance on the first party they came upon and not infrequently upright and innocent people were murdered in revenge for wrongs committed by others.

Inkpaduta's other name was Scarlet Point, for he was a killer and his arrows were often bright with human blood.

He was an Indian of great size and strength. His face was pitted with smallpox scars and he had small, squinty eyes. As soon as the white men came into a new territory the Indians learned to shoot guns and soon each Indian was carrying his own, which made the Indian a more dangerous enemy than before.

Thomas McCulla writes of these Indians: "This band of Sioux warriors seemed friendly when its members came through Cherokee on the way south down the Little Sioux River. But when they arrived at Smithland the whites stopped the Indians and demanded to know where they were going. The Sioux replied that they were going down to shake hands with the Omahas. At this the white men thought they meant to make war on the Omahas so they made the Indians give up their guns. Other accounts state that the Indians shot livestock and made constant trouble until the whites took away their guns to punish them.

At any rate the forced surrender of their arms enraged the little Indian band and they turned back upstream, determined upon vengance against the whites. They entered cabins, stole guns, and frightened children. By the time they reached Cherokee again their anger was strong and the wrongs they had suffered in Smithland had become magnified in their minds. They seized provisions and devoured them hurriedly. They shot cattle, feasted on the meat, and threatened the settlers with cocked guns if they made any objections or tried to protect their property.

One dark evening two of these Indians came to the cabin home of Lemuel Parkhurst. Amelia Parkhurst, his wife, tells the story which has been adapted for this history. "Our little settlement consisted of five cabins about a mile apart. There were five women, nine men, and seven children, making only 21 people. As we looked from our cabin homes on the broad expanse of prairie and bluff, we could see no living thing save now and then a wolf. There were no other settlers on the prairies for over 60 or 70 miles and only a few scattered cabins up and down the river. When the Sioux band came the Indians killed cattle and fired into one of the cabins. We did not know what they might do next.

"That same night we heard voices and knew from the gutteral tones that they were Indians. My husband loaded a rifle and shotgun, concealing the rifle overhead; put a cap on the gun, placing it in a corner, hanging a shawl over it, not quite hiding it. My feelings may be realized in some degree, as I took my youngest child in my arms, and seating myself with the other two, awaited their entrance. Two stalwart Indians, frightfully painted, soon appeared with wild gesticulations, striking their tomahawks into the sleepers, as well as into the cabin floor. This was kept up for an hour or more. The thought seized me, they would kill my husband and children and take me a prisoner. I secured a razor in my dress pocket, determined to take my life rather than this. One Indian held a scalping knife over my head. I took hold of his arm entreating him to spare me; not a

word could he understand but he well knew my meaning."

In spite of this great danger to herself and family, Amelia Parkhurst never lost her courage. She offered the Indians food, and though at first they refused, they finally sat down and ate. After that they became very friendly. They lighted the pipe of peace and passed it to the Parkhursts. They called Mrs. Parkhurst a "good squaw" and one of them said he had three papooses, counting on his fingers and indicating that this was the same as the number of her children. He told also of his squaw in Minnesota. At last both of the Indians went away.

So it was that the bravery of this young woman, who later became the first school teacher in the Milford colony, won the respect of these wild and angry Indians and saved the lives of all her family. Courage and calmness in the face of danger were qualities the Indians admired among the pioneers.

There were other frightening Indian episodes that winter, and the settlers' feeling of loneliness was emphasized by the piercing cold. Two of the men after six weeks volunteered to go to Sioux City for mail. They went by way of Correctionville and the snow, was packed so hard that they were able to walk safely on the crust without breaking through. This mail was the first that the lonely little Iowa colony had had for six months.

About this time two men came into the settlement to beg a little corn meal and flour. All they had eaten for a week was elk-hide with the hair singed off, cooked with watercress. On this food they had managed to exist. One of the men was married. His wife wanted the flour to make bread so they could take it with them when they started for Sac City. She had compelled him to make a hand sled for the journey and was determined to make the hazardous trip even if they stayed. The Milford settlers gave them food for the journey and they set out over the snow. Amelia Parkhurst tells us that word came back to Cherokee that these people got through safely. She adds, "Now a little travel up and down the river brought us the news of the terrible atrocities committed by the Indians after leaving us....." and how they killed the whole settlement when they reached Spirit Lake, "took four female prisoners, two of whom they shot, they being unable to endure the fatigue incident to such a journey." This tragedy at Spirit Lake in which 32 people were killed is now called the Spriit Lake Massacre.

"Some time in March a man came flying into our place telling us to get away quickly as we could, for a band of Indians were on their way down the river, killing the settlers, burning their homes, etc. With the fearful tragedy enacted at Spirit Lake still fresh in our minds, in a very short time every person and animal was ready and started down the Little Sioux. You may in some degree perhaps realize our condition, half starved horses and scarcely a wheel track to guide us on our tedious march. We did not dare light a lantern at night. Several times we hunted the

road track with our hands. We finally reached Onawa and stopped there to await events. In two weeks soldiers and scouts were placed along the river and all went back except my family. The following spring two teams came for us and we returned to our cabin home. The Milford Emigration Society sent me fifty-five dollars to teach a school of eleven weeks, which I taught with the assistance of Mrs. Carlton Corbett." (Carlton Corbett's was the first marriage in the colony.) This school had 13 pupils, three of them being the children of Amelia Parkhurst.

Two of the scouts who watched along the river in 1860 were brothers -- Samuel and Andrew Purcell. About the first of September 1861 they were out scouting on horseback near the headwaters of Mill Creek. They did not return until late at night and not caring to disturb the Lebourveau family with whom they stayed, they put their horses in the stable, which was simply a frame of crotches and poles covered with hay, as were most of the frontier stables in those days, and after caring for the horses they climbed on top of the stable, wrapped themselves in blankets and were soon asleep. But shortly after, one of the boys awakened, hearing an unusual noise in the stable below. Quietly waking his brother, he waited and became convinced from the sounds that Indians were trying to steal the horses. The night was moonless but lighted by stars. Each of the brothers grasped his rifle and prepared to shoot. Soon two Indians appeared, each leading a horse. The brothers each selected an Indian and fired. One Indian fell dead in the path but the other escaped. A party followed his tracks the next day and found that the Indian had been dragged several miles by the horse before he was able to mount. Afterward they learned that he reached the agency with the horse and recovered from the wound. The body of the other was buried on a knoll not far from the site of old Cherokee.

The settlers never forgot the first hard winter. In 1869 Harry Clark, nine years old, saw in a ravine between Quimby and Washta a great pile of whitened elk bones. His father told him that these elk had perished huddled together in the ravine during the winter of 1856. The grass which served them for food had been covered up by the deep snow. Many such herds of deer and elk died during that winter.

Chapter 7

Let us not forget the quail,
Whose bright eyes saw the pioneers
Push back the wilderness, make new frontiers.
They watched the trees fall,
To fence men in alone;
They watched and took the crisscrossed corners
For their own.

-- Marjorie Merrill Bliss

When the snows of that winter of 1856 had melted away under the spring sunshine it must have been very heartening to the Milford settlers to hear again the clear, sweet call of the quail -- the ringing sound of "Bob White, Bob White!" over the prairies. But it took a long time to settle Cherokee County. Fear of the Indians kept driving the settlers from their homes and some of these never came back. Those who remained had fences to build and the tough sod to break.

As soon as the frost was out of the ground the men were in the field ready to plow. This was called "breaking," and the breaking plow was drawn by five or six yoke of oxen. "A low murmur of protest seemed to rise from the prairie as the sharp blade of the heavy plow ripped through its tough roots. Behind the plodding oxen rolled a long, smooth black ribbon of overturned turf." In a few days the whole field, where prairie flowers had blossomed in the waving grass, lay bare and ready to plant.

The first crop was usually corn. The earliest settlers used an ax to cut holes in the overturned sod and a boy followed close behind, dripping four kernels of corn in each cut, and his brother followed, covering the seeds and stepping on each spot to press the soil down over the seeds. Sometimes the pioneer had to plant his corn alone if he had no children or if they were too small to help. By June the young stalks were up and the ground around each hill had to be hoed. There were not many weeds the first season but the soil had to be loosened.

To plant wheat, barley, rye and oats the soil was first harrowed, to break up the lumps, with a drag made of a heavy V-shaped timber through which spikes or pegs had been driven. Then the sower walked back and forth across the soft earth with a bag of grain hung from his left shoulder, leaving his right arm free to scatter or broadcast the seed evenly over the land.

At first cattle, oxen, horses, and hogs ran at large, and the pioneer had to fence his wheat and corn to keep the stock out. These first fences were made of rails 10 or 12 feet long laid in a zigzag manner with the ends overlapping.

At every intersection stakes were driven slantwise into the ground, the upper ends crossing near the top in the forks. Then the top rails or "riders" were laid. These stake-and-rider fences were said to be "hog-tight, horse-high, and bull-strong," but they were not used after barbed wire was manufactured because they wasted too much land. No wonder the quail found plenty of places to nest in the "crisscross corners" of these early rail fences.

Bridges and roads also had to be provided. Three years later in May 1859, 15 men met at the Parkhurst cabin to vote on building a bridge across the Little Sioux River. The vote carried 14 to 1 in favor of the bridge and in November of that year it was finished at a cost of $1,600. It stood at or near the ford in the old town of Cherokee. No sawmill was near at hand so the timber stringers were worked out by means of an old-fashioned whipsaw.

Until the bridge could be completed a franchise was granted to allow Albert Phipps to run a ferryboat across the river, provided he did not charge more than fifty cents for a span of horses and wagon, extra teams ten cents; man and horse twenty cents; foot passengers, ten cents, cattle three cents per head.

Albert Phipps' oldest son, Luther, was 13 years old when he came to live in the Milford colony at Cherokee in 1859. Years later he told the story of their journey and early years here. This is the story as told by Luther Phipps, whose father came to this county with the first contingent of the Milford colony.

"There were no bridges built at that time, and during the first half day after leaving Iowa City, father drove into a mudhole and the oxen twisted the tongue out of the wagon in vain attempts to move it. Father took an ax, chopped down a tree of considerable size and improvised a new tongue of great weight; one which he said would be strong enough to resist all efforts of the oxen to break, and it was, for it was all that brother John and I could do to lift it. It proved durable and was used for a number of years, often in ferrying new arrivals across the Sioux. Father's house was located on the west side of the Sioux and near the old White Mill site.

"The Sioux at this time was considerably more of a stream than at present, where so much of the rainfall is absorbed by the tilled fields; yet at times it could be forded, but for the greater portion of the year it was a feat of swimming (to get across). This was accomplished by driving the stock across, which were compelled to swim; then a long rope was attached to the tongue of the emigrant wagon, a yoke of oxen attached to the end of the rope, and the wagon pulled to the opposite shore. This service was usually performed by father who never failed when anyone shouted across for aid.

"Where the new arrivals were not possessed of livestock and desired to cross, father would ferry them across in a rude canoe, which he had made from logs. This would capsize

at the slightest provocation, and before ferrying the traveler across father would exact a promise that he should lie flat in the bottom of the canoe and under no circumstances touch its sides with his hands. Many a pioneer was thus ferried to this 'Land of Promise.'.....But -- I commenced to describe our journey from Iowa City. Well, the story of the first day was practically the story of every day. Almost no road, with numerous bogs, swamps, sloughs, and streams to pass through. We came to one passing through Des Moines, which then had scarcely attained the dignity of a hamlet, though there was a small brick building which the citizens had erected for a state capitol. On up the Coon River we came to Sac City and then on across to Storm Lake. We came across the prairie when there were no roads whatever, and not a bush or tree of any kind with the exception of three or four cottonwood trees at the inlet of Storm Lake at that time."

They crossed the Sioux River near where the White Mill afterwards stood, the fording point for arriving travelers. There were only a few colonists at that time, among them Carlton Corbett, George Lebourveau, Deacon Brown, Ben Holbrook, Silas, Benjamin and Lemuel Parkhurst, Benjamin Sawtell, and Mr. Hammond.

The Milford Emigration Society, it must be remembered, was formed of artisans. They were not farmers, and what little farming knowledge they did have was of the small Massachusetts lands. None of them believed that a family could work a whole quarter section. Only a few of the society entered lands, and those deeded them to Samuel Hayward in trust, about 100 acres for each member.

According to Luther Phipps' account these lands were sub-divided into lots. The agricultural lots consisted of 20 acres each, and timber lots varied from a few acres to 20 acres, according to the amount of timber on the tract. These lots were then numbered, the numbers placed in a hat, and each member drew a number. The number thus drawn constituted his holding and Mr. Hayward gave him a quitclaim deed to these tracts. The men thought that no man could ever farm more than 20 acres, but experience soon demonstrated that it could be done. Albert Phipps secured his 20 acres on the Little Sioux River where he built his first cabin and afterward traded timberland with his brother-in-law in order to get all his land together in one farm.

Luther Phipps states: "Brother John and I hauled the first grain raised in this country to Sioux City to a mill at the mouth of the Floyd River. We exchanged our load of wheat for flour." For many years the settlers were forced to make these laborious trips to dispose of their products and to procure provisions.

Phipps also tells of the blockhouse and stockade built in 1862 at Cherokee: "It was built at the time of the Indian uprising in Minnesota, which resulted in the massacre at New Ulm. A captain Millard with a company of troops was stationed here to protect the settlers from the Indians, and he

caused this to be erected.....It was built in such a way as to command the approach of an enemy from any direction. The first story was at one angle and the second story placed at another angle, so as to command every avenue of approach. The major avenue was not roofed, but a portion used as a shelter for man and horses was enclosed."

When news of the massacre at New Ulm reached Cherokee, Captain Millard advised the settlers to leave as he felt unable to protect them. His advice was taken and again Cherokee County was practically depopulated. Most of the settlers sought refuge in Sioux City. A few went East and from all who left only six settlers returned. Carlton Corbett, county treasurer, returned in the fall to collect the taxes of the county as the law required. The census shows that in 1863 there were but ten males and five females within the entire county. During the winter of 1862-63 the only whites in the county besides the soldiers were Carlton Corbett and his wife, James A. Brown and his wife and family, and Orange Wright and Robert Perry of Pilot Rock. But the Phipps family and others evidently came back as there are later records of these families.

In 1862, the Congress of the United States passed the Homestead Law, which provided that a settler could have a farm of 160 acres free of payment, if he made his home on the land claimed. Before this, by what is called the preemption system, the Government sold land for $1.25 an acre upon condition that the purchaser would occupy and cultivate the land. But before the Government could open land offices in all the counties, settlers rushed in to claim the land. These were known as "squatters." They came before the surveyors had measured the land, and measured their own, by "stepping off" certain distances each way. Fifteen hundred paces in each direction was said to include 320 acres (one-half section) "more or less." This was considered a legal claim. Boundaries were marked by driving stakes into the prairie or by blazing trees if the claims were in timber. Many of these boundary lines were crooked and sometimes they encroached on other claims but it was understood among the settlers that the surveyor would straighten and adjust everything. Such a claim was said to be protected by "preemption rights" and no speculator or stranger could buy it unless he paid the claim owner or squatter for the land.

Harry Clark of Cherokee County tells how his father bought his farm near Washta in 1871. This 80-acre farm happened to be on land owned by the railroads. Clark paid the railroad $9 an acre and then had to pay the squatter $500 to get him off the land.

To break five acres was often considered as sufficient evidence of ownership to hold a claim six months. To build a cabin eight logs high with a roof was enough to hold the claim another six months. If a newcomer followed this law his rights to the land were always respected. When Congress opened land offices in these communities, settlers who had

pre-empted their claims hastened to purchase these homesteads at $1.25 an acre.

Lt. Albert M. Lea said of these first settlers, "Those who have been accustomed to associate the name squatter with the idea of idleness or recklessness would be quite surprised to see the systematic manner in which everything is conducted. For intelligence, I boldly assert that they are not to be surpassed, as a body, by an equal number of citizens of any country in the world."

Trees were often planted along the boundaries between farms. Johnny O'Hagen, who took a homestead near Washta sometime in the sixties, and built a cabin, was one of these who planted trees to mark boundaries. Many of those are still growing today. O'Hagen was a strange character -- an Irishman educated for the law, who gave up his career to live alone in a log cabin on the prairie. He invented fantastic nicknames for almost everyone in the community and insisted on calling them by these names. His land lay near the railroad and he quarreled with railroad men unceasingly. Everyday they would tell him where the boundaries of his farm should be and set the stakes in place, but every night Johnny O'Hagen would move them over again to where he thought they should be. He also had the idea that the highway should not run through his land. Long years afterward when the new graveled highway was built between Washta and Cherokee this strip of road was changed, and now runs considerably west of the old road and no longer divides the old O'Hagen farm.

One cold snowy morning O'Hagen was found dead underneath the railroad trestle, his dog keeping watch beside him. His horse, still hitched to the buggy, was loose on the roadside. He had evidently left his horse to walk back to town for another round of good times and had fallen through the trestle.

Mrs. Flora Pierce, Flora Clark then, tells the story of an adventure near O'Hagen's old cabin, in about 1800. There had been a house raising and Flora, who was visiting some neighbors, was asked to go to the dance to be held that night. Flora thought she could go, but the friend she was with had been husking corn all day and was tired so she asked Flora to walk home with her. It was growing dark, and while passing through a ravine Flora saw two red eyes burning in the shadows. The reflected light of the moon must have caused it, as animals eyes do not light up except from reflected light. The settlers had talked for days about a panther and Flora knew this must be the brute. Frightened, she ran like a deer, but her friend, short and stout and unable to run fast, had fallen far behind. Flora turned, raced back, and pulled her by main force up the hill. Then they saw Johnny O'Hagen's cabin. He was still alive then, and was coming up toward the cabin with a pail of milk and a lantern. His dogs were following at his heels, but they bolted for the cabin, almost upsetting O'Hagen and the milk in mad terror at scenting the panther.

When at last all were safe inside the cabin, including the dogs, which cowered against the dark walls, Flora heard the horrible scream of the panther like the cry of a woman in pain and the blood chilled in her veins. When all was quiet Johnny O'Hagen took his gun down from the wall and walked the rest of the way home with the women.

Chapter 8

Jolly is the miller who lives by the mill
The mill goes round with a right good will.
One hand in the hopper and the other in the sack,
The right steps forward and the left steps back.

--(pioneer barn dancing song)

This old song from the days of the old square dances, reminds us that milling was second only to farming in the thoughts of the settlers, and where a mill was built there a flourishing community could be established.

The first gristmill in Cherokee County was built at old Cherokee by Johnson Wright Bliss in 1871. Before this, settlers who wanted flour had to grind small portions of wheat in the family coffee mill, or drive long distances, sometimes to Fort Dodge or Sioux City, sometimes to Mankato, Minnesota or Dennison, for flour. The trip made by slow oxteams often took more than a week and the wives and children, left alone in the scattered cabins, would watch anxiously for the husband's and father's return. Waiting was hard during these lonely days, and on the day of father's expected return excitement ran high. Chores were done early, and after breakfast the children cleaned up the yard, picked up all the chips and brought wood for the fires. The older boys chopped, and the small children scurried about, carrying away the odds and ends of trash they had collected.

The girls helped mother clean the cabin and when everything was swept and dusted, baking started. Something very special had to be baked for the return of father -- a large piece of meat, or an iron pot of baked beans with honey poured over the top and slices of salt pork added, or a monster apple dumpling. Then a white linen cloth, woven in the East, would be spread on the rough table, and the board set with the best china mother and father had brought with them.

If the water were hard to get, as it often was, all the children would bathe in the same water, but each had to have a bath. Then the little pioneer children had to have their long hair combed. No one except the boys of the family could have short hair, in those days. Braids that had come undone and blown in the wind had to be untangled and done up shining and smooth once more.

The boys brought water from the spring at the foot of the hill, fed the pigs and chickens, cleaned the barn and put in fresh bedding of straw and prairie hay, then they went after the cows -- sometimes mother and all the children went out to hunt for the cows. When all the work was done it was night. Sometimes far out on the prairie a wolf would howl and all the children would look at each other,

remembering stories of hungry wolves and bad Indians prowling along the river.

Mother strained the milk and set it back in a large bowl so that the cream could be skimmed off in the morning. Then she changed to a clean calico dress which hung against the wall of the cabin, and hunted on the high clock shelf for candles, but there never were any candles, or so it seemed, and so she would light the lard lamp and set it on the table. The lard lamp was a dish of melted lard with a strip of cloth hanging over the edge which served as a wick. When the end of the cloth was lighted it made "quite a good light."

From busy anticipation the household now fell to fearful anxiety, listening intently for the rolling creak of a wagon wheel on the dark road, or any sound to tell them of father's safe arrival.

There were such great distances in the country and anything might happen. The long waits were painful in those days.

At last when the children could wait no longer, their mother would set out the food on the white-covered table and they would eat. But mother would wait, to eat with father -- and so there were always two places left, with clean shining plates at the end of the meal. One of the children would take father's chair because there were never enough benches.

After supper, when it was too dark to play, mother read to the children by the flame of the lard lamp. There were never more than a few books at hand -- the Bible, the medicine almanac, and a few school books, so mother read the Bible because that was the most interesting. Then she would get out the last letters from home and reread them to the children, telling them stories of her brothers and sisters in the East, of her parents and of herself when she was a little girl. Then fires died down and finally the children could no longer stay up, but had to go to bed, the two youngest in the trundle bed and the older ones in the loft upstairs. Then began mother's long, lonely wait by the waning lard lamp. Sometimes it was morning before her husband came, the wagon loaded with supplies, and the horses tired out from the long haul. Sometimes he would not arrive until the next evening; the early settlers could not do anything on schedule. They had to wait sometimes for days, for the wheat to be ground at the mills, then had to endure storms, muddy roads, and cold wind sweeping across the open wagon. The pioneer women had to endure days of waiting and worrying at the lonely cabins, looking after the children, doing the chores, and keeping food on the table and fuel ready for the fires. Some pioneer women had to twist up hay, to keep the fires burning.

It is no wonder the people of Cherokee rejoiced greatly when their own mill was at last finished and the first flour ground there. It was a three-story frame structure, 40 feet wide by 60 feet long, situated on the west bank of the Lit-

tle Sioux River at a point where a wagon bridge spanned the stream, just northeast of the present business section.

A seven-foot head of water was obtained by damming the river at this point. At first old-fashioned millstones or burrs were used. These stones were ground and sharpened or "picked" by experts. The best millstones came from France although there was a place in Georgia where they could be made. The Cherokee millstones were hauled from Denison by ox-team when the mill was built. The huge millstones were flat, circular in form, eight to twelve inches thick and five or six feet in diameter. Set one above the other, the two inner surfaces were grooved or roughened in order to give the best possible crushing power. The lower stone remained stationary while the upper stone revolved with a speed that varied with the power. Some mills had more than one set of millstones.

The grain was poured into a hopper and conveyed to an opening in the center of the upper millstone. It passed under the revolving stone, was crushed and ground into flour, the flour coming out through grooves at the edges of the wheel. This flour was then "bolted" or sifted through a special cloth, called bolting cloth, and the part rejected was called "middlings," shorts, or bran.

The power to carry on this process came from the huge water wheel just outside the mill building. A Cherokee County pioneer has told of his first visit to this early mill at Cherokee. "I was only a boy at the time," he told the writer. "The mill wheels were high above my head. It seemed dark in the mill at first, the air was thick with flour, and the whole building shook and thundered with the noise of the grinding. The crunching and creaking and groaning of those millstones was terrific. The flour sifted down from above into a long wooden trough -- and it sifted down so slow -- why so slow you could eat it almost as fast as it fell.

"The grain was cleaned of chaff and seeds up above before it was ground but there were so many rosin weeds growing in the grain at that time that often they could not get all the seed out and the flour would taste of rosin weed."

Another pioneer states that after a mill was well started enough grist would be stored up ahead of time at the mill, so that when the farmer came with his grain he could exchange it on the same day for the ground flour and not have to wait.

Benjamin F. Shambaugh gives us the charges for grinding as prescribed by a general law enacted in 1343. "For the grinding of grain the tolls were paid in kind rather than in money," that is, a certain share of the grist was taken by the miller as his fee for grinding. The parts of the grists that were allowed were:

For grinding and bolting wheat or rye -- an eighth part.

For grinding Indian corn, oats, barley, and buckwheat, not required to be bolted -- one seventh part.

For grinding malt and chopping all kinds of grain -- one-eighth part.

The Cherokee Times, November 17, 1871, gives a description of the first days of the new mill. "Last Thursday marked a new era in the history of Cherokee, second only in importance to the arrival of the first locomotive that sounded its shrill whistle up and down the Little Sioux Valley.....The terrible odds against the farmer are at last removed, the selling of low priced wheat and the shipping of flour at a high rate of freight has come to an end. Cherokee now has a mill with sufficient capacity to not only grind for the home trade but also to ship thousands of barrels annually to other portions of the country. Farmers, your land is worth two dollars an acre more than it was yesterday!"

This mill became known as the "Old White Mill." In 1926 it was thought fitting to set up a marker at the site of the old mill because of the importance of this place to the early growth of Cherokee. In marking this historic spot, children of Webster School made use of the old millstones. One of the stones had been brought to Cherokee and left as anchorage for an iron hitching post. The other was found on the Phipps farm. These stones were reclaimed and set up, one flat on the ground, serving as a base for the marker, and the other set on edge at the back of this foundation -- the whole forming a monument unique in design and especially fitting. A bronze plate was attached to the upright millstone bearing the following inscription:

> These millstones, hauled from Denison
> by oxen, mark the site of the Old White
> Mill, built in 1871 by J. B. Bliss.
> Marked by Webster School, 1926.

Money for this marker, which cost $50, was donated by the school children of Cherokee. Some years later this plaque was stolen from the stone and now only the two millstones mark the site of Cherokee's first mill.

The dedication of the marker on the bank of the river just northeast of Cherokee was held October 19, 1926. Mrs. K. F. Gage, daughter of J. W. Bliss was present at the ceremony. Miss Irene Brooks, superintendent of Cherokee County schools, (1940) is a great-granddaughter of Mr. Bliss.

The mill was changed in 1887 by Charles Beckworth, the new owner, to a full "roller system." In this type of mill the grain is crushed between rollers and so the old millstones were no longer used. With the new rollers the mill had a capacity of 50 barrels of flour a day.

The water power to run the mill was still uncertain and unsatisfactory. However, P. F. Fassler, the new owner, operated it successfully for several years, but he made up his mind finally to change to steam power. The great flood of 1891 really settled the matter, for in this flood the mill dam was swept away and the water rose until it almost reached the second story of the old mill. In 1892 Mr. Fassler erected a steam flouring mill which was at first

Note: The marker is in error. "J. W. Bliss" is correct.

very successful. But again changing conditions brought about a change in the milling industry. Cherokee County farmers stopped growing wheat for flour and bought their flour instead. Great flouring mills were built up near the wheat growing centers. Small mills could not compete with these new plants, equipped to turn out thousands of barrels of flour a day, and so the flour milling industry came to an end in Cherokee County. The Old White Mill was owned for a time by Nathan Phipps but it was finally torn down.

Another mill was erected on Mill Creek in these early days but this one was also destroyed in the flood of 1891. It is said that "not a vestige of the dam remained after the flood."

In 1868 or near that date Reuben Rogers built a sawmill on the Little Sioux River in Pilot Township. Later he added burrs and ground grain to a considerable extent. A bridge across the river still marks the location of the Rogers mill. This bridge is about halfway between Cherokee and Quimby.

About 1870 Fred Stiles put in a gristmill a mile and one-half above this point in the same stream. In 1874 he sold it to Henry Wise who moved it to the waters of Silver Creek in Silver Township, where it was used for several years.

The Cherokee Flouring Mill started as a sawmill also and later was changed to a gristmill. The first mill in Cherokee County was built in 1864 by Thomas Twiford. It was a sawmill, run by the falling waters of the Little Sioux. Later this mill was sold to Mr. Hiller, who changed it to a flouring mill, putting in burrs.

In the course of time all milling in Cherokee County was discontinued and flour was shipped in sacks, as we see it today, instead of in barrels. The old millstones became curiosities. One of the smaller sized millstones may be seen today in the cemetery at Quimby, marking the grave of Walter Harvey. This stone is about three feet in diameter, a unique monument, planned by Mr. Harvey before his death in 1939.

Another industry which was at first very profitable and very important to Cherokee, was started because of a badger. J. M. Starbuck came to Cherokee to manufacture brick but for a long time he could find no suitable clay.

One Sunday morning Starbuck told his wife that he would go out once more to look for clay but if he did not find any this time they would leave Cherokee. He hitched up his horse and drove about two miles down the river. On the way back up the valley he saw a badger going down into his hole. He raised his revolver, which he usually carried, and shot the badger. When he went over to pick up the dead animal he noticed quite a heap of peculiar looking clay which the badger had dug out of the hole. That clay proved to be just what he had been looking for -- a very good grade of brick clay. This sample came from about 17 feet below the general

surface of the land, and if the badger had not dug it out, would probably have never been found. This 50 or 60-acre tract is the only spot where this grade of clay has been found in this part of Iowa. In a hundred tons of this clay not a single stone was found and it was as finely powdered as flour.

From this accidental finding came a great business and hundreds of permanent brick structures were put up each year from Cherokee brick. In 1889 Starbuck decided to enlarge the workings of the plant, to keep pace with the large brick plants being started in Sioux City. He added a 50-horsepower engine to run the machinery, a brick-pressing machine, costing $3,500, and established a continuous firing kiln. By this system, which is called the English process of brick and tile burning, which was then new in Iowa, green or new brick could be placed each day in one portion of the kiln, while finished, hard-burned brick could be taken out from the other end. Raw clay was fed into one end and finished brick were hourly taken from the same kiln.

There were great drying sheds with racks which held 160,000 bricks at one time. The output of this plant in one year was 2,900,000 brick besides a great amount of tile. But even with the improved machinery the plant could not compete with Fort Dodge and Sioux City plants because of high freight rates both on coal used in firing the kiln and in shipping the brick to market. So the immense plant was closed and has never been reopened although an abundant supply of clay still remains to be used.

Other enterprises started in Cherokee were the manufacture of cement blocks for well-curbing, chimneys, and sidewalks, a planing mill which turned out doors and windows, the Cherokee Manufacturing Company which made well-boring machinery; the Caswell Manufacturing Company; the bottling works; and various machine shops and creamery companies.

A steam laundry company was soon started in Cherokee and all types of stores,, lumberyards, cafes, hotels,and garages were built in the 30 years following the coming of the railroad. In 1872 Cherokee had two elevators, one with a capacity of 10,000 bushels. In September of that year these elevators purchased 6,000 bushels of grain a week, valued at $5,000, giving the farmers of the Cherokee community $5,000 a week to spend for Cherokee goods though the new village was only about two years old.

This same season Cherokee sold $200,000 worth of farm machinery, including many hundred reaping machines, mowers, and harvesters.

Chapter 9

You do not know the corn
Until you see the planter go
Down the long row,
And hear the "check check" as the gold seeds
Spurt down to the quick earth.

You do not know the corn
Until you see a field in bright October
You'll see a sky of such a blue
And a sky-line torn with jagged, golden stalks....

-- Marion Louise Bliss

Corn has always been first in Cherokee County, even in the Indian days. It has always been the chief crop and the biggest crop, food for man as well as for cattle, horses, hogs, and poultry. Women who had to learn to twist prairie hay for fuel welcomed the clean, hot flame of a corncob fire also, and found a hundred ways to cook the grain -- corn meal muffins, corndodgers, corn pone, corn cakes, hulled corn, mush, johnnycake, corn meal pancakes, steamed brown bread made with corn meal, bean porridge thickened with corn meal, fish fried in corn meal, parched corn, popped corn and roasting ears. These are some of the dishes which came from the cornfields, in addition to the commercial corn products such as corn syrup, cornstarch, and grain alcohol.

But corn was not always as it is now. For years men have studied and are still studying it. Each year they find some new way to make corn better and to make each stalk produce more.

At first corn was only a new kind of grass, with clusters of hard seeds at the top of the stem, which ripened in the fall. Indians learned that these seeds or kernels were good to eat. They gathered the seed each year and planted it in their gardens. Then they learned that some seeds were better than others. Each fall they saved the kernels which tasted best and were largest and finest. After many years of cultivation this grass produced heavier seeds and was not at all like the wild grass they had found first. After that it was called maize. The white men called it Indian corn.

Maize is a remarkable plant. No other crop is very much like it and it has been domesticated so long in both North and South America that now the wild grass from which it was developed seems to have entirely disappeared.

The Indians were remarkable in their work with it. The flint or flour corn raised by Indians had broad shallow kernels and was first called "squaw-corn," by the settlers. It

was soft and easy to grind and had a better flavor than the harder dent corn of the East.

Farther south the Indians raised a shoe-peg sort of dent corn. This had a deep-grained starchy kernel and the pioneer farmers of Virginia and Pennsylvania tried crossing it with the flint corn of the North. This produced the larger eared, deep-kerneled dent corn which is now grown here.

The oldest variety of dent corn grown in Cherokee County is Reid's Yellow Dent. This was developed by Robert Reid from an accidental cross made in his field. He brought late-ripening ears of corn from Ohio and planted these on his farm in Illinois, in the spring of 1847. The corn did not sprout well so he replanted the field with early small yellow flint corn. This cross gave a mixture of all sorts of ears and kernels. Robert Reid and his son selected the largest ears with kernels that had much starch and a large germ. The next spring they planted this seed and again selected the best ears. At last in 1893, 46 years later, this corn, now called Reid's Yellow Dent won a prize at the Chicago World's Fair and after that every farmer wanted to plant this variety of corn. It became very popular and for years was considered the best corn which could be grown in this region.

Other men learned to experiment with corn and several good varieties were produced, among them the Silver King, a white corn which won several prizes. Canned hominy is now made from this white corn. Soon the interest in corn became so general that corn shows were held each fall by farmers. The Corn Palace built in Sioux City in 1900 was the result of these corn shows. This Corn Palace was so extraordinary and so beautiful with its turrets and spires of corn that people from all the counties of this region went to see it.

At first corn was judged by appearance only. Smooth cylindrical ears, straight rows, wedge-shaped kernels were desirable. By these standards Reid's Yellow Dent usually won the prizes.

Finally Henry A. Wallace began to wonder if all the "bad" ears thrown out were really poor ears. He found, by planting these ears, that high yield was not always in proportion to good looks. He studied the amount of moisture in different kernels, the tendency to shell easily, the stiffness of the stalk and the height of the ear from the ground. His studies finally led to the development of hybrid corn. When two inbred varieties, both of which looked very poor, were cross-bred, the results were often astonishing. In 1925 hybrid corn won the yield test against all other varieties. It became so popular that now almost every farmer is growing hybrid corn. In the case of the hybrid corn new seed must be purchased each year for the farmer cannot save his own seed. The hybrid corn does not produce a high yield the second season.

The methods of planting, cultivating and harvesting corn have changed quite as greatly as the cornfields have

been changed. The Indians planted the seed in hills and cultivated their small patches with clumsy hoes made of bones of animals sometimes fastened to a stick for a handle.

The pioneers first planted the corn by hand, and gathered, husked, and shelled it by hand. But in Cherokee County the corn was always planted in straight rows, each row made up of separate hills of corn.

Soon the corn-planter was introduced, a machine run by two men. One sat between two boxes of shelled corn near the front of the machine. The other sat at the back and drove the horses. Before the planting started the field was marked out in rows, by means of a wooden marker made of four or five planks fastened together in such a way as to make furrows in the soil when the planks were dragged across the field. The corn-planter was not driven along these furrows but across them at right angles. This formed a way of checking the hills, before the invention of the check-wire. As each furrow was crossed, the man in front would jerk back a lever, releasing three or four kernels of corn from each box so that two rows of corn were planted each time the team crossed the field. A gauge at the side of the planter kept the rows in a straight line.

Today corn is planted with the check-wire. By this method a wire with buttons spaced at regular intervals serves to trip the lever and plant each hill of corn. Every time the lever hits a button it is jerked back, releasing three or four kernels of corn from each box. The wire is as long as the rows of corn and is moved over as each row is planted. The back wheels of the planter follow the line of planting and pass over the corn, covering the kernels and pressing them down into the soil. By this means the cornfield is laid out in squares like a vast checkerboard with a hill of corn planted at the corner of every square, and the corn may be cultivated both crosswise and lengthwise.

Much corn is still picked or husked by hand in Cherokee County although corn picking machines are common.

To pick corn by hand a standard grain wagon is used. One side is built up three to five feet by the addition of "bang boards," to stop the corn when it is thrown to the wagon. Each ear strikes the bang board and falls into the wagon-box. The husker wears flannel gloves or mittens and usually a peg or hook on his right hand to pull back the husks. A husker usually picks two rows each time through the field. In the early morning it is cold in the field and each stalk of corn is often white with frost but when the sun comes out the frost melts, the husker puts on a dry pair of husking gloves and strips off his outer coat, working in his shirt sleeves. The average husker picks from 70 to 100 bushels a day. Anybody who can "shuck a hundred" a day, all season, is a very good man. The wagon is unloaded at the back by means of a scoop board which drops down allowing the corn to be rolled downward into the hopper of the elevator. Power to run the elevator is often furnished by a tractor or by horses hitched to a "sweep" which turns in a circle about the power axis.

Old-time corn-shellers were also run by horsepower. Six or seven horses were necessary to pull the sweep and set the machinery in motion. Next steam power was used and now tractor power turns the modern corn-sheller. The sheller takes the kernels from the cob and separates the two, the cobs coming from one end, and the shelled grain flowing through a spout into a waiting wagon. From the wagon the corn is stored in grain elevators until it can be shipped out. These elevators are tall wooden buildings near the railroad tracks. Painted brick-red or gray they mark the sky-lines of the Middle West, as characteristic as the rusty-red of the freight cars drawn up on the siding, waiting to be loaded.

At first six or seven hours of "squaw labor" were necessary to produce a bushel of corn. Now with a tractor on nearly every farm, a bushel of corn can be produced with five minutes of man labor.

But corn, while most important, is not the only crop grown in Cherokee County. Flax was grown in the very earliest days and is now being grown again. Flax was the "money-crop" of the pioneers. The seed could be readily marketed and commanded a good price. The straw when rolled into balls made excellent fuel. The method of making these balls has been described by a pioneer lawyer of this county who worked as a boy on his father's farm. He says a wooden tool was used, shaped like a crank. This crank would be placed against a stack of flax straw and the handle twirled until a ball of straw would be wrapped firmly about the end of the crank. The ball would then be pulled from the end, the straw broken off, and the ball thrown into a basket. Another one would then be made in the same way. Because of the fiber in the flax straw the balls remained tightly rolled and because of their oil they burned with a hot, intense flame, much better than prairie hay.

Wheat was another early crop. It was grown for bread and the first fields of wheat grew tall and rich in the new soil. One man says: "We were driving up from Ida Grove and came over the divide to the north of Maple Valley. From that high point we could see for miles across the valley of the Little Sioux. The vista of new prairie farms stretched before us. My father stopped the horses. There was a field of wheat on our left hand and he bent down the heavy stalks until they reached across the road. From wagon rut to wagon rut lay the wheat and the heads were a little beyond." But now a field of wheat is a rare sight in Cherokee County. Now oats and barley are the "small grains" most generally grown. Oats were formerly grown for horse feed; now most of these oats go to the oatmeal factories -- and the barley goes into the production of malt for liquors. Soybeans are rapidly becoming important to Cherokee County farmers since a factory to process the beans has been built near Quimby in this county.

The hay crops are alfalfa, timothy, and the clovers. Sudan grass is a new crop which is now being grown for hay.

Red clover was first introduced in Cherokee County by Henry Roddis, in 1878. He grew it on his farm in Sheridan Township and by the second year had a fine stand. For years red clover was most popular of the legumes, as a soil builder, as well as for hay. Later it was displaced by sweet clover, and alfalfa. Now a field of red clover is as rare as a field of wheat.

The problem of cutting hay and grain was a tough one for many years. Grain was at first cut with a cradle. This was simple, being only a scythe with a small frame secured to the end of the handle, to catch the grain as it fell. As the cradle was swung back for the next stroke, the grain cut on the previous stroke was allowed to slip off the frame to the ground. The long window thus formed was easily raked into bundles. Binding was done by hand, with long grain stalks. It required a powerful man to swing the cradle all day in heavy grain, and two acres was considered a day's work.

With the invention of the sliding sickle-bar improvements in cutting machinery developed rapidly. The "dropper" was one of the first. This was a horse drawn mower with a cradle to catch the grain and a reel to brush it off the cradle and drop it on the ground, when a sufficient amount for a bundle had accumulated. This was followed by the Marsh harvester invented by two brothers in DeKalb County, Illinois. This was the first machine to use canvas on rollers to lift the cut grain to a platform, where one or two men stood and bound the bundles in sheaves before they were thrown to the ground. All these machines developed from the reaper, invented by Cyrus McCormick in 1831. In 1857 contests in cutting grain with horses were shown in illustrations in "Harpers Weekly." Finally the "binder" was added to the harvester. This machine bound and tied the grain into bundles. A "shocker" is a man who follows the binder, setting up the bundles in small stacks of eight or ten each, to cure and dry out the grain.

Now, with these new machines, a man could plant as many fields of grain as he wished and know that his grain could be harvested. By the early 1870's the horse drawn mower, the horse drawn rake, and the riding cultivator had appeared. In the same way these machines widened the hayfields and the cornfields. Farms expanded in both directions. At first an 80-acre farm had seemed large. Now a half section, 320 acres, and even a whole section could be farmed. Production was doubled and then doubled again.

By 1907 new modern houses with running water and furnace heat were being erected in Cherokee County. New barns were built, hog houses, great cattle sheds, wells were dug, windmills put up to pump the water, and life began to be easier on the farm. Each farmer planned to buy his first automobile soon. By 1913 many farmers had automobiles. This period of farm prosperity lasted until after the World War.

In the 1920's the beginning of the great depression was first felt on the farms of Iowa. Small town banks began to

close their doors. Farmers lost their savings, borrowed money to keep going, mortgaged their land, mortgaged their livestock, always with the hope that next year prices would be better and they could pay their debts. But things got worse instead of better. Many of these farms were eventually lost to their owners. Mortgage foreclosures increased until by 1932 the farmers were desperate. They organized the Farm Holiday Association and held what were probably the first farm strikes in history. These farmers of the Middle West had tasted the good things of life and were determined to lead a revolution before they should be reduced to the status of "old world" peasantry. They formed bands to picket roadsides to prevent the marketing of milk, cream, or livestock. They were determined to starve the people into a realization of their plight. But no one starved because of the Farm Holiday. The movement was broken up and the trucks started running again. In Cherokee County a mob of farmers had threatened to burn the courthouse but this was averted. All this tumult, however, aroused public sentiment and new legislation was enacted to help the farmers.

Since farming is the greatest industry in Cherokee County let us watch the farmer as he follows the seasons around the calendar for the year's work.

Early in the spring as soon as the frost is out of the ground the farmer gets out the tractor or teams and begins to get the land ready to plant small grain. He may disk the fall plowing or disk last year's cornfields, ready for the planting of oats or barley. This planting is sometimes broadcast with an endgate seeder, a device fastened to the back of a wagon, which scatters the seed over the ground, but often it is drilled in with a grain drill.

After the small grain is in, the farmer starts spring plowing for corn. After each field is plowed it must be dragged or harrowed until there are no large clods of soil left and the land is well pulverized for the corn planting. The corn is not planted until May for it is a tender crop and the young grain cannot stand spring frosts. So, on the earliest day he believes it is safe against frost, he starts planting corn. Perhaps a week later the corn will all be in, if he has good luck, and two or three weeks later the first field planted will be ready to plow. After that there is no rest until the corn is "laid by" in early July. But before that the first crop of hay is ready to be cut so the farmer must leave the plowing to cut the hay and then go back to the plow while the hay cures. If the sun shines the hay will be ready to rake the next day. After that it must be picked up with a hay loader or by hand, loaded in hayracks, and stacked in the field or mowed away in the hayloft of the barn.

By that time the oats and barley fields are ripe. The farmer fastens the tractor to the binder and cuts the grain. Several men are usually hired to shock the grain, and when it is all cut and shocked it is time to make hay again and after that the threshing season starts. Then all farmers

"exchange" help, that is, share each other's threshing labor. When the farmer's grain is threshed and marketed he takes in the first money of the season.

Now he gets out the mower and mows the weeds and grass along the roadsides and starts the fall plowing. Stubble fields are usually plowed as soon as the grain is harvested. Before he plows the stubble he often spends two weeks hauling manure, which is scattered over the soil with a "spreader."

Some farmers cut green corn early in September to fill the silos. This corn is shredded and packed into the silo for winter feed for stock. This silo is a tall, cylindrical tower built of gray cement, or wood staves, or hollow tile. The next crop to be harvested will be soybeans. After that the farmer will start snapping corn to feed his hogs, cattle, and chickens. Snapped corn is corn picked without removing the husks.

After the first frosts in October the corn is dry and hard and husking starts. It usually takes weeks to harvest the corn even when a corn-picker is used. When the corn is picked by hand the husking may last until after the first snows -- late November or early December.

In the winter the farmer feeds livestock. Water must also be provided during the winter months, cows must be milked, butchering and the cutting up of meat must be done, and poultry and stock marketed.

THE RAILROADS OF CHEROKEE COUNTY

Chapter 10

There were two big thrills that everyone looked forward to while they were waiting for the railroad to come to Washta. The first was to see a railroad train, and the second to ride on one. The children were more impatient than the grown folks. They talked excitedly as they walked out to watch the men building the new tracks. They talked of their first ride on the grand new railroad train which was to come, and they gathered gum from the tall rosin weeds and chewed as they talked. They would hunt along the stems of the plant for bits of the rubbery sap which might have oozed out of the stalks. If they could find no gum in this way they would break the stalk over and let the milky fluid run out. Then they would leave the stalk to dry in the sun and a few days later they would come back and gather the huge drops of gum from the bent stalks. The children learned to call this giant rosin weed with its shaggy yellow flowers the gumweed because of the good gum it produced. It was a long wait however, before their dream of a railroad was realized. Meanwhile the fathers and mothers of these children wanted the advantage of the railroad more than they wanted to see a train, more even than they wanted to ride in one. They wanted to ship their hogs and cattle out to market and to ship in flour, lumber, stoves, and farm machinery. They wanted the new business and prosperity which a railroad would bring. And they wanted their mail!

In 1856 a railroad had been planned which would cross Iowa from Dubuque to Sioux City. This road was supposed to have been built in 1860 but the coming of the Civil War delayed it for four long years. Then, when the war was over, the Homestead Act and the Railroad Bill granted free land to the farmers and to railroad companies so that the new western territory could be opened up more rapidly; but no new tide of settlers and prosperity arrived. Times were hard and the Indian trouble, with the massacre at New Ulm, Minnesota, had driven most of the people out of the county. New settlers followed the old stagecoach road through Correctionville and did not come to Cherokee.

By 1869 however, this situation was suddenly changed. The railroad from Iowa Falls to Sioux City was started. Settlers began to come in and by the close of the year there were 500 people living in the county. The road was built out from both ends, from Sioux City and from Iowa Falls, and by the summer of 1870 the last spike was driven at the center. By this time the population had jumped to 2,000 and by December of that year it had gained another thousand, which shows how fast new settlers came in as soon as a railroad was built into a new region. This road passed through the newly platted towns of Aurelia, Cherokee, Meriden, and Marcus. Cherokee had to be moved over one mile to the

southwest to be on the railroad. Cleghorn, now on this same line, was not settled at that time. This east and west line tapped a vast new area of trading. Business boomed in Cherokee. But still a north and south road to link the county more closely together was needed.

The Illinois Central consented to build this branch line but nothing was done about it. The people of Fort Dodge wanted it built through their town, and the people of Storm Lake wanted it too. Seventeen years went by and the question remained undecided until Cherokee citizens, led by Mayor Thomas McCulla, decided to do something about it. A delegation of 22 leading men of the community drove to Sioux Falls to present their case in favor of the new railroad through Cherokee. In his history of the county, written later, Mr. McCulla states "Cherokee took advantage of the psychological moment and the citizens working harmoniously secured the prize.....The result of this meeting was that Sioux Falls cooperated heartily with Cherokee and other towns to the north, and within sixty days dirt was flying, not only in grading the north line but also the line south to Onawa." Thus was the road begun in the spring of 1887.

At last, late in the year of 1887, when the frost had blackened the yellow fringes of the rosin flower and the stalks of the river weeds rattled in the wind like the bones of scattered skeletons, the first locomotive came thundering into the town of Washta. This town had also been moved to meet the railroad, from the west side of the river to the east side.

Here were the children watching by the tracks, round-eyed and happy with excitement. Here were their fathers and mothers, their friends and their neighbors, their cousins and aunts and uncles. Everyone in the community had turned out for this was a great day. Down by the hitching posts a line of horses and buggies, surries, teams and wagons, saddle horses and oxen were tied.

Now the fathers of these children could build buildings, elevators, churches, new schools and new homes. Now they could have books, very important to these Iowans. Their mothers could buy thread and calico, gingham and starch, sugar and kerosene from the new stores which would soon be built. Now these pioneers could have bright new kerosene lamps filled with red oil and shining tin lanterns to light the way when they went out after dark to do chores. They could buy shingles, nails, glass for windows, new tin cake-pans, ranges, Round Oak heating stoves, and coffeepots. Now they could buy fine bleached sheets for the beds and maybe a "store-boughten" mattress. Before this most of them had slept on straw-ticks, filled with fresh straw each year at the threshing, or corn-husk mattresses stuffed at the time of the corn husking.

Farmers could buy harvesters, riding plows and real horse-drawn corn-planters which could actually plant corn without a man to drop the grains in each hill.

In the East everybody had wonderful things; now the

railroad trains into Cherokee and into Quimby and into Washta brought these wonderful things to the children of the West. Farmers sent out trainload after trainload of grain and livestock, and had money in the bank. To the children, of course the railroad was most important at Christmas time, when it brought painted sleds, skates, bright red rocking horses, and dolls with yellow curls. It brought strange new factory candies and thin sticks of gum, flavored with spearmint, and wrapped in bright pink paper, with a yellow label around each package. Years later it brought them the Sweet Pea Primer -- a marvelous little book with rosy covers, all spangled over with pink and lavender sweet peas. Every child could learn to read from the Sweet Pea Primer -- even the four-year-olds forgot their fears, and begged to start to school just to read in the Sweet Pea Primer. Even the parents of the children enjoyed the gay little book.

The railroads, by the Railroad Act, were given every other section of public land for 10 miles on each side of the track. The railroad companies sold this land to the people and with this money they built the roads farther and farther westward until at last they linked the tracks with the roads in from the Pacific and there was a line across the whole United States from coast to coast.

To show the rapid strides made in building in the summer and fall of 1870 it has been said that James Archer sold $20,000 worth of lumber. Luther and Rice sold 226,000 feet of lumber, 467,000 shingles, 16,000 pounds of building paper, four carloads of sash and doors and a carload of nails and other hardware. C. E. Hobert sold much lumber, 150,000 shingles, 50,000 lath, 106 doors and 157 windows.

By New Year's Day 1871, the new town of Cherokee had five grocery stores, two hardware stores, two meat shops, three hotels, three lumberyards, one implement house, a schoolhouse, three physicians, one harness shop, two shoe shops, three blacksmith shops, three law offices, three church societies, three civic orders and three saloons. A roundhouse was also built years later after the second railroad had been built.

For what happened after that, John Chamberlain answers from the pages of Harpers Magazine; "The Homesteaders..... needed the railroads to carry their produce to market; the railroads, which got rich grants as a result of political influence, needed the westward migration in order to have an economic empire to tap. But during the half-century following the Civil War the railroads, backed by New York and English and Dutch capital, showed themselves far superior to the farmers in consolidating the victory of Appomattox." He goes on to say that Lincoln's struggle for the common man still continues. "Appomattox was nothing final." The farmers lost their money and their land through the years, and the war for economic freedom and justice for all must be fought over and over in this land. But although the ultimate victory did not come with the railroads as every one thought, there is victory in the knowledge that the fight for it still goes on.

EDUCATION AND RELIGION IN CHEROKEE COUNTY

Chapter 11

There were two things which could not be packed into a covered wagon beside the family portraits, the old silver, the carved bedsteads and the patchwork quilts and brought from Illinois or Ohio into Iowa, or from Massachusetts into Cherokee County. These two things were the forces of religion and education. These came with the first settler and remained the same for the West as for the East. The New England Public School system, the puritan tradition, and the influence of the church, moved west with the wagon ruts. However small might be the group of settlers, they gathered weekly to pray for guidance and courage in their new home.

At first school and church services were held in the various homes but soon suitable buildings were put up and more regular sessions held.

Most of the school teachers who taught in the early days were well trained, many in eastern colleges or academies. But these early teachers had to have a large share of courage and fortitude also for wild Indians, sudden storms, blizzards and loneliness threatened them, and the equipment they had to use was meager and inadequate at best. Mrs. Fanny Bowers Smith who taught the first term of school in Washta -- soon after the town had been founded says, "We had no two books alike at our school and there were about fifty pupils."

But there were schools much earlier than this -- Amelia Parkhurst taught the first school in the county as early as 1858, when the Milford society sent her $55 to teach a term of 11 weeks, which she taught with the assistance of Mrs. Carlton Corbett. They had 12 pupils at this school and it is interesting to note that among them were four children from the Phipps family and three from the Parkhurst family.

In 1860 Rosabella Corbett taught a school by herself. This was the first school in Pilot Township. Mrs. Corbett walked out from Cherokee to the log schoolhouse in fine weather but when the weather was unfavorable she rode behind a team of slow-plodding oxen. Eight years later the first frame building to be put up in the township was a schoolhouse, made from lumber sawed at the Banister sawmill. It will be remembered that George W. Banister headed the second Milford company, which settled a few miles away from the main colony at Cherokee.

The third log schoolhouse which we have any record of was built near Washta on Section 31 in 1869. A. J. Whisman helped build this school and a newspaper account of his early life tells us, "The seats were made of logs into which holes had been bored and sticks driven to serve as legs. The desks ran along the sides of the room and were made of boards which Jack Whisman had sawed at a mill farther down the river. These boards rested on sticks driven between the

logs which formed the side of the building."

The blackboards were merely boards nailed together and painted black. The erasers were bits of sheepskin with the thick wool left on for a brushing surface.

Most of the other early schoolhouses in Cherokee County were frame buildings. The floors were rough and unsightly and the walls scarcely weather-tight. There were not enough windows -- the room was dark and chilly. A stove was set up near the center of the room and a crooked stovepipe led to the chimney at one end. The stove was fed frequently with wood but the supply was often inadequate and some of the children dragged their benches nearer the fire and propped their books upon their knees.

When all the pupils were busy there was the characteristic clatter of the slate pencils.

The room was crowded. Grown boys and girls worked beside the smaller children, and all the desks and benches seemed to have been made for the larger children. The teacher struggled through the morning helping one with ABC's and another with algebra. The schedule was as crowded as the room, but the three R's and spelling held their own.

The early social life in each community centered about the schoolhouse. Here the singing and spelling schools were held, and church services and gatherings of all kinds. Near Cherokee these social gatherings did not get well started until 1870 after the building of the railroad. At that time the Rev. W. F. Rose, first settler in Marcus Township, began to organize singing schools, not only in Cherokee but in outlying districts. He was a good singer and young people came from many miles to join his classes. He was also an able preacher and was so interested in education that in 1877 he was elected superintendent of county schools.

Not everyone could sing, however, but spelling schools were fun for the entire family and night after night entire families would amuse themselves spelling about the fireside. Easy words were given the small children, harder words for older ones and their parents. At spelling meets opposing groups of spellers faced each other, standing at opposite sides of the room. The audience sat in the space between. Words were given out to each side in turn and when a word was missed, that speller had to sit down. When only one was left on a side the suspense of the contest was increased and interest ran high.

Sometimes box socials were held at the close of the singing or spelling school. Everyone always enjoyed the excitement of the auction as big lunches packed away in plump boxes were sold. The young men added to the fun by bidding against each other until often one had to pay from $16 to $20 for the box of the girl of his choice. Going home afterward the races were exciting too with sleighs and bobsleds passing each other in friendly but dangerous rivalry.

Prof. Charles A. Fullerton, who wrote the familiar "red song book" for elementary school music, Eva L. Gregg, Agnes J. Robertson, and Kate Logan, the Cherokee County

author, each contributed much to the rapid improvement of these schools. It was during the term of Miss Robertson as county superintendent that agitation for a township high school started. She favored such a school and Grand Meadow Township high school opened. That was a great day. Six miles from Washta a four-year high school had started. In 1911, also, a special school for young men was organized in Marcus Township, but lasted only two winters.

In the meantime city churches and city schools were being built in all the towns of the county, but still the smaller towns had to put up with two or three-year high schools. Even when they did get four-year high schools there was often not enough equipment to meet state requirements and the schools were not accredited. Students who meant to go on to the state university had to attend high school in Cherokee or Correctionville.

The first recorded activity for consolidated schools for the county appears in the spring of 1915 when the Cherokee Times announced that the election held March 25 to determine whether or not consolidation should be effected by the union of Spring and Afton townships of Cherokee County, with Brooke and Elk townships of Buena Vista County, was decided against the consolidation by a vote of 67 to 23. No further action was taken on this.

The next action was a special election called at Aurelia for the purpose of combining several rural districts with that of the town of Aurelia in the settlement of a consolidated district. The election was also defeated by a narrow margin but the advocates of consolidation were not discouraged and preparations for another election were started.

At this time Buena Vista County east of Cherokee, led all the counties in the state in the number of its consolidated schools, and consolidation was discussed everywhere. An advocate of consolidation told his friend who was opposed to it, "You might as well vote for it now as it is sure to win later on."

The other replied, "If I am going to have hog cholera I'd rather have it three years hence than now."

Most of the arguments, however, centered around the higher taxes which farmers would have to pay.

In spite of hot arguments and bitter objections however, the Aurelia community held another election March 1, 1916 and this time consolidation won.

The consolidated school at Aurelia was the first in operation in Cherokee County. It embraced the Aurelia school, ten rural districts in Cherokee County, and two in Buena Vista County. Motor buses were used to transport pupils from these outlying districts to the central school. The initial term opened on Monday, September 4, 1916, with a full attendance from all sections of this area.

Larrabee community also voted to decide whether a new building should be erected. The vote passed by an overwhelming majority and a building to cost $125,000 was

planned, its construction to start in the spring of the same year.

During the early spring of 1920 the first national conference on the consolidated school movement was held at Cedar Falls and invitations were issued to all county superintendents and educators. Margaret Montgomery was then county superintendent of Cherokee schools.

On January 28, 1920 the Washta consolidated school burned down. The loss was partly covered by insurance and bonds were voted for a new consolidated school building, to cost $100,000. A temporary building was erected in the meantime, and part of the classes were held at Washta Federated Church.

There were ten consolidated districts in Cherokee by September of 1920. They were Afton, Amherst (Simpson Bethel), Aurelia, Brooke, Cleghorn, Grand Meadow, Larrabee, Meriden, Quimby, and Washta. The majority had by this time erected or planned new buildings.

In 1929 a Cherokee Junior College was started at Cherokee. This was a two-year college and offered a wide variety of courses. Credits were transferable to any college or university in the Middle West. While this college was under the supervision of the Servants of Mary, students of all denominations attended. Fees were kept as low as possible and many students who could not afford to go out of the community for advanced education found their opportunities at this school. But in 1938 that college at Cherokee was closed, when the Massachusetts Mutual Life Insurance Company brought a foreclosure judgement of $40,511 against the Servants of Mary, who maintained the school.

CHEROKEE COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Schools	Elementary	High school
Aurelia Consolidated (Joint with Buena Vista County)	233	181
Cherokee Independent	739	393
Cleghorn Consolidated	100	65
Larrabee Consolidated	123	61
Marcus Independent	143	165
Meriden Consolidated	114	72
Quimby Consolidated	145	96
Washta Consolidated (Joint with Ida County)	159	72
Grand Meadow Consolidated	78	44
Total	1834	1149

Rural
Afton Township Consolidated
Simpson Bethel Consolidated
In Buena Vista County; Brooke Consolidated - joint with Cherokee County
Rural Township Schools: Total rural 817
Total public school enrollment in Cherokee County 3800

Chapter 12

Cherokee

Let not our town be large, remembering
That little Athens was the Muses' home,
That Oxford rules the heart of London still,
That Florence gave the Renaissance to Rome.

Record it for the grandsons of your sons--
A city is not builded in a day:
Our little town cannot complete her soul
Till countless generations pass away.

-- Vachel Lindsay

This story of a town is not the story of its brick and stone but of the people -- the men and women who built Cherokee and are still building it. Those early men and women put up a struggle for every log and for every brick that went into the first crude structures. They maintained the place of Cherokee as county seat, won their battle for the first railroad, built the mills, the bridges, the homes, the churches and schools, in the new town. Later ones helped in the location of the State Hospital for the Insane, the public library, the new post office, new schools and churches and their own Sioux Valley Hospital, the courthouse on the hill, the paved streets, Wescott Park and all the other improvements which have been added through the years.

The first permanent platting of the town was made by Samuel Hayward, on Section 22 and 23. This was a full half section of land and was known as Original Cherokee. Here a courthouse was built in 1863 and a brick schoolhouse in 1867. Here also the blockhouse was built as a defense against the Sioux Indians who kept coming back from the north to steal and plunder among the settlers.

Robert Perry was the first to found a home here. Born in Ireland, he came to Massachusetts and at the age of twenty-three was married to Miss Catherine McDermott, also Irish, from Massachusetts. The newly married couple decided to make their home in the west and two years later they were there, camping on the banks of the Little Sioux. Here Perry became a land owner and outstanding farmer and, as we have seen, guided the members of the Milford company to this region.

Later New Cherokee was built southwest of this first town in 1870 when the first railroad ran from Iowa Falls to Sioux City. Cherokee, now the third largest city in northwest Iowa can attribute part of its growth to this railroad and the later branch line, but many other factors contribut-

ed. In 1881 a new courthouse was thought necessary but it was not until 1891 that the new building was finished. This ten-year struggle, however, resulted in a large and impressive courthouse on the hill west of the business section. The jail was formerly located in the basement but in 1936 a new jail and home for the sheriff was built on the grounds to the east. The first boom in land values came with the "Magnetic Springs Health Resort." This spring of semi-soft and highly magnetic water was discovered by a workman who had been prospecting for coal and had found the water instead. Invalids started drinking the water, and a sanitarium hotel called The Fountain House was built, with 52 rooms. Because of this, business flourished for a time. Bathhouses were added and treatments given by the promoter, Dr. Gee of Chicago. Later, when the city dug the municipal well five blocks away the Magnetic Spring ceased to flow, and the place was closed about eight years after it had been opened. Finally the Fountain House was torn down.

Another institution which brought business and wider interests to Cherokee was the State Hospital for the Insane, opened for the reception of patients August 14, 1902. Located one mile west from the business section of the town, this institution has grown into almost a city in itself. The grounds cover an area of 1,000 acres, and the hospital carries on farming operations, raising much of its own grain but buying $12,000 worth of grain and hay a year from county farmers. Here we may find one of the finest dairy herds of cattle in the state and about 1,000 hogs.

As Cherokee developed along all lines so she developed also in the arts. She has the Columbian Club, a study club for women organized as early as 1893, the year that Iowa joined with the National Federation of Women's Clubs. In 1897 the Tone Circle was organized for the study of music and in 1900 the Art Club was started for the study of art.

Beyond the river on either side of Cherokee stretches the "black soil" region of which Josephine Donovan, Cherokee County novelist, wrote in her work by that name.

One afternoon in September of 1886 a group of women met at the Congregational Church to discuss the founding of a library. By 1898 this library had grown to a total of 1,641 volumes. Several years later the mayor of Cherokee wrote to Andrew Carnegie for money to erect a library building. Carnegie agreed to help Cherokee and in 1904 a $10,000 building was planned. Later the city obtained $2,000 more for furniture and fixtures. The library was opened in May 1904 with Miss Jessie Swem as librarian. At this library are some rare books -- the American Almanack, printed when Great Britian still had control of the Thirteen American Colonies, and others. The library now (1940) has more than 16,418 volumes, and Miss Fensler is chief librarian.

The pioneer newspaper in Cherokee was the Cherokee Chief. There are now three newspapers -- The Chief, The Daily Times, and The Courier. Robert Buchanan was the first editor and wrote the first history of the county. He was a

vigorous thinker and stirred up much opposition from other newspapers but these opposing organs did not last long. It is interesting to note the names of Cherokee's many newspapers: The Chief, Times, Leader, Enterprise, Democrat, Courier, Reporter, Independent, and the Herald Republican. Now only the three remain.

Pilot Rock, which has given its name to Pilot Township, is three and one-half miles south of Cherokee. This boulder measures 40 by 60 feet at the ground and rises to a height of 20 feet. The Indians called this red rock of Sioux quartzite, "Woven Stone," the name thought to have been derived from the net work of trails which even today may be visible in early spring, as they radiate crisscross and interlace about the rock. The Indians believed that the spirits lived at certain chosen places -- a great rock, a tall and stately tree, or a wild blue lake. The white man, eager to build his own churches, may have forgotten these churches of the wilderness, and so may often have invaded the sacred temples of the savage Sioux.

The Pilot Rock Plowing Match was named for this big rock. The match is an annual event held in late August or during the first days of September on some Cherokee County farm, and has become famous as the only real plowing match still held in the United States. The idea of the match originated in Scotland years ago, and when Dan and James Patterson came across the ocean to settle in East Wheatland Township of Will County, Illinois, they held the first match there in 1878. Later, James visited his brother Andrew in Cherokee County and the idea was brought to Iowa. It was not until 1908 that the first plowing match was held in Cherokee County. Due to the efforts of Archie Cochrane who drove a horse and wagon through the county getting subscriptions toward prize money, and stirring up interest, this first match was a success and for 32 years the match has been held yearly and from walking plow to tractor plow the match has progressed. Tom Liffring still keeps the old walking plow which won the first match on his farm near Cherokee, and Steve Welch remembers winning the first prize of $7.50 with this plow. Cochrane was the first president of the Association, and Hal Dewar was first secretary and treasurer. Other features of the usual county fair are enjoyed during the days of the match. Each year since 1922 the Cherokee Daily Times has published a special Plowing Match edition of several sections, giving a complete account of county affairs during the year.

Aurelia in Pitcher Township is a pleasant place. All through the year it has a sunny, open-to-new-ideas look. Its people are active, and amiable. The streets are wide and smooth and the buildings substantial. The town, with its 700 people, lies 50 miles northeast of Sioux City on State Highway 5, and nine miles east of Cherokee.

Aurelia was named for a daughter of John I. Blair who promoted the railroads through the vicinity, established towns, and made money selling town lots, as fast as a new

town had been laid out. He is said to have been an eccentric and a millionaire and was not very well liked. He came from Blairstown, New Jersey, and seems to have named several of the railroad towns of northwest Iowa.

The town serves an agricultural community and has developed accordingly. Public utilities include the People's Telephone Company, Western Union, American Railway Express, the Electric light plant and the waterworks.

The Aurelia consolidated school extends its influence over a wide area. The standard of education is high, students in dramatics, especially, making outstanding records in state and district contests. The average enrollment is 350 students.

The churches are the Congregational, Dunkard, Evangelical, Lutheran, and Methodist.

The Aurelia Sentinel, founded in 1880, is a weekly newspaper.

The township is named for Horatio Pitcher, who as a young Bostonian with his discharge from the Union Army, came to Cherokee County in 1868 to take up an entire section of land, section 34. An outstanding young pioneer farmer, young Pitcher broke 60 acres in his first year. The sod was tough and discouraging, and he said later that he would not undertake it again.

He sold his crop to the advancing Illinois Central Railroad, whose track was being laid at that time. Before Aurelia had a stockyard, Pitcher was shipping out hogs.

Pitcher's daughter and two sons still live in the pioneer house which, though it has since been remodeled, still holds memories of Civil War days; the lean face of Lincoln, reviewing his victorious, battleworn troops, and the victory parade through Washington. Somewhere in the attic, the Civil War letters are sill tucked away.

Cleghorn is a comparatively new town. It was not incorporated until 1901. It is named for the Rev. Adam Cleghorn, who donated or sold all the land on which the town is built. The streets are beautiful, lined with shade trees and comfortable homes. In each deed Dr. Cleghorn stated that if alcoholic liquors were "sold or used on the land, other than for medical purposes", the land and all the property on it would be returned to the estate. So Cleghorn was founded on the principle of temperance and right living and kept to that principle throughout the years. The American Legion and Woman's Temperance Union are both active here.

The town is located on the Illinois Central Railroad which runs west from Cherokee, in Sheridan Township. It is said that in 1872 the grasshoppers came to the region and thwarted the plans of many a man who calculated to settle here. Nothing further was accomplished at settling the township until after the grasshoppers had finally left in 1878. Henry Roddis was the first settler. He built his first home from prairie sod but later the same year built a house of lumber hauled from Sioux City. The framework was built from logs hewed out by hand with an ax. In this home

his son was born October 19, 1869. This was Ezra Edmond Roddis who lived to operate the farm where he was born.

Somewhere in this lonely region, where poverty and hunger followed in the wake of the grasshopper hordes that took the crops year after year, pioneer William Bowers' wife died of homesickness. That was the year the railroad came but it came too late for Mrs. Bowers.

Meriden, in Sheridan Township near Cherokee, was first called "Hazzard" by John Blair, after one of his relatives. But the townspeople did not like the name any better than they liked Mr. Blair and petitioned to have it renamed. The first attempt at business here was a "wet grocery" opened to sell liquor to the men who were building the railroad. Later on the "damp goods" were emptied out by the upright citizens of the town and the groceries were sold to F. K. Prescott who added a general stock of merchandise. F. K. Prescott and Company were also the first grain-buyers. An elevator was erected with a capacity of 10,000 bushels. At that time wheat was the king of the crops grown in the county. The Quaker Oats Company now owns the elevator here.

The graveled highway, State 5, connects the town with points east and west. The only church is the Presbyterian. There is a park, a consolidated school with a kindergarten, eight grades, and high school; a town hall and the Modern Woodman lodge rooms housed in an old mill structure.

Two former newspapers -- The Ledger and The Journal have both been discontinued.

Larrabee is situated in the northern part of the county in Cedar Township. Platted in 1872, it was named for William Larrabee, Governor of Iowa from 1886 to 1890. Cedar Township is noted for excellent farm lands and thrifty farmers and the famous Mill Creek winds through this territory. Since 1872 when its first school building was erected, Larrabee has made progress in educational development. In 1921 a consolidated school building was provided for the children of the town and country at a cost of $100,000.

In June of 1920 Larrabee organized a Community Club in the bank building there, and free movie shows were given.

Marcus, named for one of the sons of John Blair, is "a man's town" in spite of the Women's Club and the P. E. O. The town had a depot and warehouse as early as 1869. From the start Marcus was one of the best shipping points in the county. Even in 1883 it was classed as the second important point between Dubuque and Sioux City. The farmers surrounding the town all raised large crops of small grain while breaking up and preparing the land for corn.

The latest achievement of these progressive Marcus farmers is the growing, testing, and selling of hybrid corn. In a February issue of The Marcus News, for 1939, we find this statement; "The average yield of hybrid corn in Iowa was sixteen and nine-tenths percent more than the yield of open pollinated varieties according to the report of the 1938 corn yield test. In district No. 4, in which Cherokee County is located, the average yield of five entries of open

pollinated was seventy-three bushels per acre in this county."

John Sand of Marcus was the first man to grow hybrid corn in Cherokee County. His son, Merle, raised the first certified seed in the county. The Sand farm, 400 acres in extent, has become a testing ground for different varieties of corn. Sixty-eight different varieties are grown here and in the fall the frequent tests for moisture content are made by Dr. H. J. Barre, Federal agent in charge of corn storage. When the last variety has matured the results are compared and in this way the best type of corn to grow in this region is determined. Mr. Sand has made a lifetime study of corn, and of the problems of the ever-normal granary. John Sand sells hybrid seed corn and tests the soils of farms. He is the inventor of the Iowa Ear Corn Test Probe which makes possible the gathering of a representative sample of shelled corn from the center of a crib in a few moments;a trying problem for government corn loan representatives since the beginning of the corn loan program. Mr. Sand's probe had been sold in 14 Corn Belt states by 1939 and was approved as a standard equipment by the United States Department of Agriculture.

The Marcus public school has an enrollment of over 300 pupils, and the Marcus Holy Name School, in charge of a faculty of eight Sisters of Charity has an enrollment of 156 pupils. There are four churches here: the Catholic, Christian, Lutheran and Methodist.

Quimby is located in Willow Township, ten miles south of Cherokee on the Little Sioux River. The town was named for an officer of the Illinois Central Railroad, a branch line of which was run southward from Cherokee to Onawa, passing through Quimby and Washta. Platted October 3, 1887, the land on which Quimby was built belonged originally to George Seller and A. J. Clark. The first building was a grain elevator built in that year by E. M. Dickey and Company, of Cherokee.

The Methodist Church was organized here in 1889 with "twelve faithful members." That year a church was erected at a cost of $1,400. In 1924 the present church was built and was fittingly dedicated in 1925, Bishop Keeney of Omaha giving the sermon.

The Quimby consolidated school was built in 1922 at a cost of $90,000, a stone-trimmed brick building that stands on a five-acre plot of ground, south of the business section.

The I. O. O. F. lodges of Cherokee County established an 80-acre park on the old Perry farm northeast of Quimby. This tract of land was left to the organization in the will of Banks Perry, a son of Robert Perry, but until 1940 no improvements had been made upon it.

On a thousand acre farm one mile northwest of Quimby is the soybean mill built in 1937 by four Simonsen brothers, with W. E. Simonsen of Quimby as manager. This plant received nearly all the soybeans produced in northwest Iowa and was in constant operation night and day from October to

February in 1938, a period of 117 days, to take care of that year's crop of beans.

In the month of July, 1939, a flax seed processing plant was installed by the Simonsen brothers. By August 1, of that year, 10,000 bushels of flax had been received in ten days. Four hundred bushels a day may be processed by this one machine. The products made are linseed oil, for paint, and oil meal for feeding stock. The flax grown in northwest Iowa is of exceptionally high grade quality. Until the Simonsen brothers built this plant, the nearest processing centers were Des Moines and Minneapolis.

Washta lies in a deep valley between high hills which border the Little Sioux River. The late A. J. Whisman who founded the town in 1887, took its name from friendly Indians who passed that way. One of the braves asked for the white man's gun, examined it curiously and then passed it back exclaiming, "Washta, Washta!" "Good! Good!" Two of these hills on the west which rise to a height of some 80 feet have been named because of their outstanding height. One of the hills bordering the town is called Rany's Knob, for G. W. Rany, an early settler. Jane Rany's marriage to A. C. Gipe was the first marriage in Willow Township.

George Stratton, whose father farmed on land where Washta was platted, states that in those days there were 13 Indian mounds on the site. Twelve of them were in a straight line running east and west and the thirteenth was at one side. They were leveled off by the settler's plow, however, and may be seen no longer.

Pioneer banker here was James Robertson,Sr.,who founded the Washta State Bank, later managed by his two sons, James and Alexander. In 1897 Alexander married Nancy Briggs of Omaha, only granddaughter of Ansel Briggs, the first governor of Iowa, and from that time on they made their home in Washta. Here the great grandchildren of the historic Briggs were born: Briggs Robertson of Jefferson, Catherine Comrie Robertson of Rock Springs, Wyoming, and Alexander Drummond Robertson of Cherokee.

Virgil Geddes, the playwright, was born near Washta and spent his boyhood with his grandparents at Cherokee after his young mother died. The plays he wrote and produced include The Plowshare's Gleam, As The Crow Flies, The Earth Between, Behind The Night, Native Ground and many more; each showing the influence of early days in Cherokee County.

A weekly newspaper, The Washta Journal was established as soon as the town was founded in 1887 and has been kept going without interruption since that time. A long list of able editors has contributed to its success.

Some of Iowa's rarest birds and most beautiful wild flowers may be found in the Zimmerman woods near town, among them the yellow ladyslipper and the wild tiger lily. Here also on the Little Sioux River may be found evidences of the work of beavers, for here was one of the first places in Iowa, to which the beaver came back, after rigid game protection over a period of years had increased its numbers.

This region has been considered for a state park because of its natural woodland. A state game area has been established and the community has become conservation-conscious.

The founders of Cherokee County had faith in the bounty of its lands, nearly 600 square miles. And the outer world shared in the riches that Cherokee gave to the arts and the professions. The list of names is long and the forces varied that stand in the realms of religion, agriculture, education, literature, music, painting, dramatics. When Corbett and Parkhurst first set foot on the land that was to become Cherokee, they had the dream of a city in their hearts.

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